

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/73081>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

**THE ROLE OF BRAND AFRICA IN
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:
A DIASPORAN PERSPECTIVE**

by

PENELOPE MUZANENHAMO

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
WARWICK BUSINESS SCHOOL

November 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of figures.....	IV
List of Tables.....	V
Appendices.....	VI
Acronyms.....	VII
Acknowledgments.....	VIII
Declaration.....	X
Abstract.....	XI
1. Introduction: Continental Branding – A Child of Corporate Branding?.....	1
1.1. Background	1
1.2. Research area and relevance.....	2
1.3. Thesis structure.....	7
2. Conceptual Elaboration: Brands.....	9
2.1. Introduction	9
2.2. The constructs of brand, brand meaning and brand value	10
2.3. Branding: Marketer domain or interactive process?.....	18
2.4. The significance of brands.....	26
2.5. Brand co-creation in online communities	30
2.6. Chapter summary	36
3. Conceptual Elaboration: Place Brands and Sustainable Development	38
3.1. Introduction	38
3.2. Places as brands.....	39
3.3. Place branding: The construction of place meaning	44
3.4. The idea of supranational place brands	55
3.5. Place branding and its link to development	59
3.6. The notion of sustainable development	66
3.7. The place Africa: Image and development	74
3.8. Knowledge gap identified in the literature	86
3.9. Chapter summary	88
4. Methodology.....	90

4.1.	Introduction	90
4.2.	Sample and its justification: The African diaspora.....	91
4.3.	Rationale: Netnography.....	94
4.4.	Chapter summary	103
5.	Methodology: Technical Application	104
5.1.	Introduction	104
5.2.	Netnographic inquiry.....	105
5.2.1.	Entrée into two online communities of African diaspora	105
5.2.2.	Data collection	111
5.2.3.	Data analysis and interpretation.....	116
5.2.4.	Reporting	121
5.3.	Semi Structured Interviews: Triangulation with Experts.....	122
5.4.	Chapter summary	124
6.	Defining Brand Africa.....	125
6.1.	Introduction	125
6.2.	Interpreting Africa.....	126
6.2.1.	Africans and their collective actions.....	135
6.2.2.	‘Social reality’: African diaspora and relating to the continent	142
6.3.	Brand Africa: Linkage to corporate branding.....	149
6.4.	Chapter summary	159
7.	Brand Africa and Sustainable Development	161
7.1.	Introduction	161
7.2.	The role of people.....	162
7.3.	The contribution of Africans	167
7.4.	The contribution of political leaders.....	178
7.5.	Key processes	183
7.5.1.	Industrialisation	184
7.5.2.	International cooperation	195
7.6.	Brand Africa and value generation: Linkage to corporations.....	204
7.7.	Chapter summary	211

8. Brand Africa and Sustainable Development: Critical Factors	214
8.1. Introduction	214
8.2. Continental integration	215
8.2.1. Collective identity: Significance.....	215
8.2.2. Collective identity: Challenges	222
8.2.3. Political integration: Significance.....	227
8.2.4. Political integration: Challenges	236
8.2.5. Economic integration: Significance	240
8.2.6. Economic integration: Challenges	244
8.3. Education and skills.....	259
8.4. Critical place factors: Linkage to corporate branding.....	269
8.5. Chapter summary	275
9. Discussions and Conclusions.....	278
9.1. Overview of key research findings	278
9.2. Implications	282
9.2.1. People	282
9.2.2. Leadership.....	292
9.2.3. Place branding and sustainable development.....	298
9.3. Conclusion.....	300
9.4. Limitations and directions for future research	305
10. Literature	306
11. Appendices	326

TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: COMPLEXITY OF PLACE AND CORPORATE BRANDS	52
FIGURE 2: CORE SOURCE OF MEANING – CORPORATE PRODUCT BRAND VERSUS CORPORATE SERVICE BRAND.....	56
FIGURE 3: NETNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY OF TWO AFRICAN DIASPORAN COMMUNITIES	107
FIGURE 4: COMPARISONS –VICTORIAN AND DIASPORAN DESCRIPTIONS OF AFRICA AS DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PEOPLE	140
FIGURE 5: BRAND AFRICA AS PEOPLE CENTRIC	158
FIGURE 6: BRAND AFRICA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.....	210
FIGURE 7: EXAMPLE OF TRADE BARRIERS	247
FIGURE 8: SUPRANATIONAL PLACE BRAND AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – CRITICAL FACTORS....	274

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: THE MULTIPLE DEFINITIONS OF BRAND – EXAMPLES	14
TABLE 2: MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2015	82
TABLE 3: ECONOMIC REGIONAL COMMUNITIES (RECs).....	250
TABLE 4: CORPORATE BRANDING PARADIGM APPLIED TO A SUPRANATIONAL PLACE	283

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: BRAND AFRICA ON SOCIAL MEDIA (AVAILABLE 15 JUNE 2013)	326
APPENDIX 2: COMMUNITY ATTRIBUTES	327
APPENDIX 3: AFRICAN DIASPORAN INFORMANTS	329
APPENDIX 4: THREADS ANALYSED.....	330
APPENDIX 5: EXPERT INTERVIEWEES	332
APPENDIX 6: EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL ATTACKS TRADED BETWEEN COMMUNITY MEMBERS	332
APPENDIX 7: AFRICAN CENTERED EDUCATION	333

ACRONYMS

African Diaspora Community 1 (AFD1)

African Diaspora Community 2 (AFD2)

African Development Bank (AfDB)

African Union (AU)

Cable News Network (CNN)

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)

Economic Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

United Nations (UN)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

World Commission on Environment and Development of the United Nations
(WCED)

World Economic Forum (WEF)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For some, education is a basic human right but for others, a gift. My deepest thanks to my two supervisors: Dr. David Arnott and Professor Franklyn Lisk. David, I tried to keep your very first hard question at the back of my head throughout the period. The question went like this, “what would you like to write, and where is it going?” Thank you very much for challenging, listening to, and relentlessly guiding me. Franklyn, thank you very much for expanding my horizons. Patiently, you introduced me to the world of practitioners and guided me through the effort of making this research relevant beyond academia. The valuable expert interviews would have been a huge challenge without your assistance. I could not have asked for a better mentor; thank you Prof. Dr Chris Browning, my deepest gratitude for the valuable support with hosting the ‘pioneering’ BrandAfrica Workshop here at the University of Warwick in March 2014. Your expertise and commitment is inspirational. Dr Temi Abimbola, it was enough to have you say: “Yes; it’s possible”, and then the journey started. My deepest thanks to you for believing in this research. Dr. Christine Vallaster, many thanks for helping me build the foundation for an academic career.

To the practitioners and members of the African diasporan communities online, my deepest gratitude for your valuable insights without which this story could not be told. The African diaspora, your commitment, questions and search for answers introduced me to an entire world of insights of immeasurable quality and volume. My PhD colleagues who also walked the same path as I, thank you for the great moments we shared along the journey. A joke cracked here and there about getting

permanent head damage (phd), laughter and the collegiality made this journey more tolerable. My grandparents, my deepest gratitude for the values you instilled in me. You taught me to fear God, and I hope I heed the lesson. My Tete Margreth and late Ambuya Gwena, thank you very much for showing me how to keep the faith. Rita, Hanna and Johannes, thanks for being good friends. My two brothers, Tinashe and Masimba, I will always be grateful that you are part of my life. This here is also your story. Toni and Doris Gutheinz, you lit the candle more than two decades ago back there in Neshangwe. My adoptive father Anton SchwarzmueLLer a PhD holder yourself, you kept the fire burning all these years. Dad, you never doubted, you believed in me and made huge sacrifices for me. Toni, Doris and dad, you made me, me. Here is a token of my gratitude and I hope you like it.

Dear Dad,

To know that in some ways I am writing about myself

To see myself within those words and beyond

To be me in those words, without being them at all

To be me in the text, without it being me at all

A set of contradictions, dreams, desires and hopes

But what is a human being without these

(Penny, Warwick, November 2014)

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work, except where due acknowledgement is made, or where specific reference is made. This thesis has not been submitted for any higher degree at another university.

ABSTRACT

Brands mean and do something for someone somewhere. Brands are also created and owned by someone. However, some ‘brands’ appear to simply ‘exist as givens’, without attracting notable academic attention. *Brand Africa* is arguably one such ‘brand’. Therefore, this research applies the paradigm of social construction, netnography with two African diasporan communities, and semi-structured interviews with experts to explore *brand Africa* and its potential contribution to sustainable development. Research on place branding is grounded in corporate branding theory. Our work consequently reflects on the potential extension of the underpinnings of corporate branding to a supranational region of continental scope.

Our findings reveal that *brand Africa* is an allusion to Africans based on what they do collectively, locally yet within a global context as evaluated by outsiders. A supranational place brand such as *Africa* can thus be conceived of as a people centric construct, which revolves around the collective actions undertaken by the inhabitants of a place in a recurrent fashion over a long period of time. Collective actions are central to the emergent place brand – they signify something about both the people and the place, and that signification renders a place with meaning. Our results strongly show a lack of delineation between the place and the people in the construction of the meaning of Africa. From the perspective of the African diaspora studied in this work, people are the place and vice versa. Moreover, we postulate that if the place is the people, and people collectively act, then a place can be abstractly seen as a ‘human actor’. The manifestation of collective actions implies that places act, ideally in pursuit of specific goals (e.g. produce enough food). The actions undertaken create (or should create) value for the place (as the people).

People make places metaphorically by giving them meaning through collective actions as observed by outsiders. People also make places literally in the sense that they drive sustainable development internally. This is analogous with the pivotal role of members of a corporate service organisation in defining its respective brand and socio-economic value to stakeholders. We also contend that collective actions are only valuable to sustainable progress insofar as they generate value through the utilisation of competitive resources available to a place, and for the place. Resource endowments alone do not warrant sustainable and more equitable growth. The process of value creation is internally oriented, and for the benefit of the inhabitants of a place. We maintain therefore, that the co-ordination and internal organisation of collective actions to ensure resource utilisation is as central to the enduring prosperity of supranational regions like Africa as it is to corporations. The factors crucial to such management are integration, committed political leadership, human capital, and the place's effective participation in global partnerships. A supranational place brand must be a coherent and effective entity, as a prerequisite for ensuring sustainable development.

We formulate our research implications as: I) Supranational place branding involves the co-ordination of collective actions, which requires top management; II) Internal brand building should be prioritised and; III) The sustainable development of a place reflects that of the inhabitants collectively. Research limitations are linked to the online environment as the research site. Future studies may expand into statistical analysis offline. Our research is deemed academically relevant in its endeavour to conceptualise *brand Africa* and its significance in value creation with the context of

sustainable development. Practically, our research highlights factors that should be harnessed and leveraged in order to create a more competitive *brand Africa*.

1. INTRODUCTION: CONTINENTAL BRANDING – A CHILD OF CORPORATE BRANDING?

“Branding has moved so far beyond its commercial origins that its impact is virtually immeasurable in social and cultural terms” (Olins, 2003, p.14).

1.1. Background

The first time I heard of ‘free maize’ was somewhere in 1988. Like the rest of the children and families in our village in Central Zimbabwe, I was overjoyed by the reality that we were receiving ‘free’ 50kg bags of maize from abroad for making corn meal. The implications of receiving ‘free food’ for who I was were never something I contemplated, not even as an adult. Also, I had never heard of the two words ‘food aid’ and ‘African’. I did not even know that a person could be called African. As far as I was concerned I was the granddaughter of ‘so and so’, and I reacted bitterly to the label ‘the girl from the village’ used by some of the folks from the ‘city’. Interestingly, my identity changed with context from the village to the city and to Europe. It was during the first year at University in Austria when I started calling myself Zimbabwean. Yet I realised that regardless of how much I insisted on being a Zimbabwean, I was African. I started asking why ‘African’ was a more ‘important’ category to ‘non-Africans’ than Zimbabwean or Angolan and so on. I then discovered that there was not only ‘African’, but also something called *brand Africa*. I speculated that ‘the brand’ was intertwined with who I was. Today, I still have a vivid memory of how in February 2007, I passionately argued on BBC Live Radio Programme ‘Have Your Say’ that *brand Africa* was misconstrued. However, I

never stopped asking why and how a place as gigantic as Africa could ever be a brand.

1.2. Research area and relevance

A brand is loose yet powerful, and always interconnected with something exchanged in the marketplace. Everything can be branded (Stern, 2006), and anything can be a brand, even dirt (O’Guinn and Muñiz, 2009): “*Today branding is ubiquitous*” (Olins, 2003, p.15). While for some objects, the theoretical and technical branding approaches are clear, well researched and seasoned; for others the methodologies are still vague. Such objects appear on face value to attain the status of *brand* through a somewhat enigmatic process, or by some natural means. Hence ‘brands’ like *brand Africa* – or the idea of Latin America (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2000) – seem to ‘just exist as givens’. Also, the perversity is, they become widely popular, if not notorious, across a range of social actors for instance in: academia (Anholt, 2006; Danish Institute for International Studies, 2012); international institutions (New Partnership for African Development of the African Union, 2011; World Economic Forum on Africa, 2013); mainstream media (Newstime Africa, 2013); and social media networks (ReconnectAfrica, 2010; see appendix 1 for Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) . These ‘brands’ generate immense excitement often amidst controversy and a myriad of speculations on what they are, and how they form as they have what Olins (2003) describes as social content. This matters to social actors since it is a source of value.

However, as *brand Africa* is attached to a place, approaches for investigating place brands are not as enigmatic, given that the models that illuminate on the evolution of

such entities are rooted in the corporate brand paradigm. Researchers and practitioners look up to theories and cases within that paradigm as blueprints for understanding and managing brands that represent places like towns, cities and nations. Interestingly, researchers have started using the concept supranational place brand without offering a transparent model on how such entities are constructed. At the same time, the ‘emergence’ of concepts such as *brand Africa* raises a question regarding the potential extension of corporate branding to supranational regions such as continents: How loose yet powerful is the corporate brand paradigm when applied to a continent, can it be stretched to assimilate, and expound the potential formation of a supranational entity such as *brand Africa*? Remarkably, scholars tend to view corporate branding as a template for place branding, yet the requirements of branding a corporation can vary depending on whether the main source of value is tangible (i.e. a product) or intangible (i.e. a service). Therefore, the underlying question of this research is formulated as ‘to what extent can the corporate branding paradigm be applied to a continent?’

Brand Africa is an intriguing concept and case in point for the reason that it does not appear to stand for any distinct object(s) exchanged in the marketplace that can be acquired by a consumer; yet it has a certain presence. Simultaneously, the phenomenal surge in interest around the concept seems undeterred by the absence of published research that visibly and systematically investigates what *brand Africa* is and its relevance within the marketing domain. The continent of Africa is also at a turning point economically as claimed by multiple industry experts (e.g. Economist, 2011 and 2013; New York Times, 2012; Time Magazine, 2012). This casts an

additional question into the foreground pertaining to the linkage between economic development and place branding in general.

By and large, researchers and practitioners tend to convey messages that portray *brand Africa* as the continent's poor image (e.g. Anholt, 2006). Yet as a mental picture of a known phenomenon, image is merely a brand facet. A brand transcends its image, for instance it can also be a relationship partner (Fournier, 1998). Thus the presupposition that *brand Africa* signifies the continent's image is not only an oversimplification, but also a false equivalence that immediately draws our attention to a question, which it fails to address, namely 'what is the phenomenon called Africa?' Moreover, a 'brand' is only a brand insofar as it generates social/economic value for specific stakeholders. Yet some ambiguity still floats around *brand Africa's* potential value to (specific) stakeholders.

In general, the objectives of place branding are linked to development by various approaches (e.g. boosting a country's image to facilitate exports or attract tourists). Consequently in extending the underlying question noted above, this research addresses the issue of *brand Africa's* role in facilitating development on a sustainable and more equitable basis (i.e. sustainable development). Linking the two conceptual entities is deemed valuable given the 'fact' that the continent of Africa is the most impoverished place, of which citizens have the shortest lifespan on Earth. Also, the knowledge that every brand has stakeholders (or brand interest groups) triggers the question of who the potential *brand Africa's* stakeholders are. Evidently tourists, investors, development organisations, multinational corporations and broadly, citizens of other regions are likely to have an interest in *brand Africa*.

However, the African diaspora has historically taken the lead in shaping the continent's development plateau, at least through political ideologies (e.g. Nkrumahism) (for a review, see, Adi, 2002; Mohan and Zack-Williams, 2002). Exploring the African diaspora's notions may deliver some valuable insights, especially now at a stage when the continent is at crossroads between poverty reduction and image rejuvenation.

In the main, the idea of places as brands appears to be immersed in a struggle to win legitimacy from, and the deeper appreciation of marketing researchers. Yet places have always been 'branded' through the process of naming (Anholt, 2010). The seventeenth century philosophical deliberations on place perception (Go and Govers, 2009) strongly point to the earliest endeavours to differentiate places through skilful invention or selection of names and their attachment to places. These initiatives were, and are still, intended to symbolise certain existing or aspired associations, as means towards the achievement of specific socio-economic goals (Anholt, 2010). Hence places are not only meaningful entities, but also evolving as objects of extensive discussions globally.

The enormous interest in places is particularly visible among individuals who gather in online communities to share their knowledge and experiences on products, tourism, development and cross-border human interactions inter alia. Distinctively, the continent of Africa is emerging as a lucrative subject for debate predominantly among the African diaspora. By itself, the bulk of virtually embedded discursive performances linked to Africa, makes the latter an attractive avenue for research from a branding perspective: Given the significance of meanings to brands (e.g.

Batey, 2008; Stern, 2006), as well as the premise that continents are deeply meaningful and mythical entities in their own right (Lewis and Wigen, 1997).

By virtue of its nature, the proliferation of online communities has so far exercised a significant impact upon how researchers and practitioners alike study and conceptualise brands. There is a gradual shift from what may be portrayed as conservative models towards a more integrative sociological branding paradigm (O'Guinn and Muñiz, 2009). The latter views brands as socially created by societal actors (Kozinets, 2010; O'Guinn and Muniz, 2009). Within such model, brand value is equally conceived of as a product of social negotiation (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Jones, 2005; Merz et al., 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000 and 2004; Schau et al., 2009), which accrues legitimacy through collectively sanctioned market discourses (Arvidsson, 2005). These ideological movements have been supported by the innovation of research methodologies such as netnography (Kozinets, 2010) that target online communities, and thereby allow for the investigation of brands globally in ways rarely experimented with before.

Moreover, the fundamental significance of these observations lies in their pegging of brands and brand value(s) as social constructs, thereby clearly inviting an engagement with, and giving voice to, the social construction epistemology (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) as a theoretical lens for analysing the concept *brand Africa*. We consequently draw on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) thesis to inform our inquiry into the constitutional processes through which an African diasporan online community may establish a meaning for the continent as its 'objective and valid' representation, albeit from the community's perspective. Moreover, Schutz (1967

and 1970), who inspired the epistemological underpinnings of social construction, proclaims that individuals interact with an object based on the meaning it holds for them. It is the perceptions of a brand that affect stakeholders' interactions with, and more specifically, their financial and emotional investment into the brand in question. Therefore we proceed to explore how the perceived meaning of Africa may affect its progress on a sustainable basis from the perception of the African diasporan community.

1.3. Thesis structure

The subsequent section (Chapter 2) looks at how a brand is defined, who defines it and for what purpose. Chiefly, the idea of brands as socially constructed is featured in detail within the chapter. Chapter 3 addresses the issue of why and how places have acquired some significance from a branding perspective. It is argued that places are branded for socio-economic goals of local and international relevance. Development is presented as the main objective of place branding. The chapter also extends into the analysis of the construct sustainable development, and the case of Africa's image and development. Chapter 4 lays out the argument for the adoption of netnography in the investigation of a phenomenon such as *brand Africa*. The chapter underlines for instance, that the value of netnography lies in its capacity to explore phenomena on a global scale. Chapter 5 describes how the respective methodology was conducted with two online communities of African diaspora. The inductive theory building technique is also reviewed to provide a portrayal of how netnographic insights were converted into the conceptualisation of *brand Africa*. While Chapter 6 centres on the question of what Africa means to the continent's diaspora, Chapter 7 engages with the issue of how the meaning is associated with the

role of the brand in sustainable development. Chapter 8 identifies the critical factors that potentially impact on *brand Africa's* capacity to achieve sustainable development. Chapter 9 concludes this work with an overview of the key findings and their implications, prior to an analysis of the research limitations and potential directions for future research.

2. CONCEPTUAL ELABORATION: BRANDS

“The survival of brand is a signal of its vitality” (Stern, 2006, p.217).

2.1. Introduction

This chapter scrutinises the construct brand outlining the contesting definitions, their basis and sphere of convergence. It is observed that meaning serves as the nexus among the multiple interpretations of ‘brand’. Locating meaning at the core of brand definition, the chapter then resumes by querying the creation of brands. It is argued that brands are not invented by marketers alone, but socially constructed by multiple stakeholders during social interaction. This thesis is situated as an understanding of brands from a sociological perspective, which embraces the idea of brand co-creation in line with observed market dynamics. It is stressed within this chapter, that the process of brand co-creation is driven by the socio-cultural and economic value generated by brands for both individuals and companies.

The chapter also draws attention to online communities as platforms on which brand co-creation is most visible and effective among brand interest groups, as demonstrated by various studies reviewed subsequently. On one pole, research on brand co-creation is steadily growing, on the other pole, the co-creation of place brands appears to have been neglected by scholars so far. This gap in research leads the chapter to question whether the corporate brand paradigm can be utilised to analyse a brand that relates to a whole continent such as *brand Africa*, and its role in

sustainable development. Development tends to be the primary objective of place branding as illustrated by several studies cited within this chapter.

2.2. The constructs of brand, brand meaning and brand value

With a Germanic etymology dating back to the second century, the construct of brand is a loose, and yet powerful concept that has accumulated a wealthy of definitions as demonstrated by de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo-Riley (1998) and Stern's (2006) philological analysis (for some examples of the multiple definitions, see table 1). Some of the interpretations can be attributed to researchers' inclination to offer varying propositions (Kapferer, 2004, Aaker David, 2004) based on their motives and disciplinary backgrounds. Others may be due to the tendency among scholars not to reach consensus on definitions deemed crucial to the understanding of key social phenomena (cf. Hillery, 1955). Alternatively, the multiple and frequently confusing propositions (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo-Riley, 1998) may be explained by academic endeavours to broaden the concept brand, so as to allow it to capture and reflect the constantly observed market dynamics. For instance, studies show that the widespread use of more advanced social media are exposing new dimensions of stakeholder-brand interactions, which scholars and marketers now seek to integrate into the conceptualisation of a brand (e.g. O'Guinn and Muñiz, 2010; Kozinets, 2010).

However, the primary point of reference and departure for the mushroomed definitions is the American Marketing Association's (AMA) original depiction of *brand* as a “name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these intended

to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (American Marketing Association 1988, cited in Kotler and Armstrong 1996, p.283). In its simplest form, this logic underlines the semiotic role of *brand* as merely conveying the owner or origin of a market offering to specific audiences. Despite receiving numerous attacks for its perceived conceptual inadequacy (e.g. de Chernatony et al., 2011), the enduring AMA definition is subscribed to by a number of leading scholars who include Aaker (1991) and Kotler et al. (1996). Others like Kapferer (2004) partially adopt the same interpretation in regarding a brand as *“a name that influences buyers [thus] becoming a purchase criterion”* (p.11). Among other scholars, de Chernatony et al. (2011) observe that the historical development of branding set the ground for justifying the use of the term brand as a simple semiotic device signifying ownership or origin of a market offering.

Classical branding started in the 1870s within the fast moving consumer goods sector, following a period of life threatening product contaminations and quality variations (Olins, 2003). A brand was meant to assure the housewife as the era’s primary target of branding, of a safe, clean and consistent quality of the product that she used, by a clear identification of who produced or sold it (ibid.). At the same time, it was in the manufacturer’s commercial interest to secure a legal registration or trademark for his or her product in order to protect it from (cheap) imitations (de Chernatony et al., 2011). This historical trajectory of branding thus dictated that *brand* would be equated with some level of market legitimacy, to what Indi (1997) calls *“a descriptor applied to the sort of fast-moving consumer goods one buys from*

supermarket” (p.3), and a legal statement or designation of ownership (Kotler and Armstrong, 1996).

The AMA’s exposition may have sufficiently served its purpose at the time of its articulation and a few years beyond, but its focus on what Keller (2008) pinpoints as brand elements, and a mere functional role of *brand* is too restrictive, as well as inconsistent with the unfolding changes observed on markets. This line of criticism does not negate the role of *brand* in protecting a market offering’s unique features. Instead, Keller’s (2008) view quickly draws attention to one of the underlying weaknesses, precisely the presumption that for example every time a marketer invents a new name or logo, or symbol for a new product, (s)he will have automatically created a brand (ibid.). Yet brands grow from experiences accumulated over time (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). A market offering potentially transforms into a brand when it has generated awareness, attained reputation and prominence in the marketplace (Keller, 2008), and this is not a one day or time event.

Apparently, the shortcomings of the traditional AMA definition have propelled an unprecedented increase of *brand* reconceptualisations. Several ongoing attempts to refine the initial explanation and sensitise it to contextual developments have also encouraged a much wider engagement with the construct across disciplines such as politics (e.g. Browning, 2007 and 2013). While this has paved new analytical pathways, it has also amplified the volume of confusion around the brand concept. However, Stern (2006) makes a fundamental attempt towards clearing the conceptual ambiguity by subsuming the operating interpretations under two broad categories.

She notes that *brand* can be understood literally as a *denotation*, and metaphorically as a *connotation*. The scholar proceeds to underscore that the AMA's original school of thought (i.e. the utilitarian perspective where an entity or a noun such a sign is used to distinguish a market offering) resembles the typical conception of *brand* as a denotation (Stern, 2006).

Metaphorically, *brand* represents a connotation of an image, for instance "*a killer brand*" ingrained in the consumer's mind (Stern, 2006, p.219). An example of connotation is Keller's (2008, p.3) portrayal of *brand* as "*a perceptual entity rooted in reality...something that resides in the minds of consumers.*" That 'reality' or 'something' is a reference to an image, or a set of mental associations related to a market offering, and contributing to the perceived value of the offering in question (ibid.). The majority of contemporary definitions fall within this connotative perspective. However, two issues emerge from such interpretations. Firstly, by being consumer-centric¹, they overlook other critical stakeholders like employees. Secondly, they tend to entail an element of bias, which emanates from a rather quick assertion of associations as value additive. Brands exist not just within the social world of consumers, but also that of various social actors in societies, who take an interest in the brands, and get involved with them. Brand associations can therefore be complex, intermingled and ranging from positive to negative, exerting a boosting or undermining influence upon a market offering (see, Luedicke, 2006).

¹The terms 'consumer and customer' are used interchangeably within marketing literature. In this work, customer/consumer is understood as someone involved with a market offering and who acquires it for use or consumption.

Table 1: The multiple definitions of brand – Examples

Author	Definition	Classification
Anholt (2007)	“A brand is a product or service or organization, considered in combination with its name, its identity and its reputation” (p.4)	Connotation and Denotation
Anholt and Hildreth (2005)	“At heart, a brand is nothing more and nothing less than the good name of something that’s on offer to the public” (p.164)	Connotation
AMA 1988, cited in Kotler and Armstrong (1996, p.283).	A brand is a “name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors”	Denotation
Batey (2008)	A brand is a cluster of meanings	Connotation
de Chernatony (2011)	A brand is a cluster of functional and emotional values that enables organizations to make a promise about a unique and welcomed experience (p.31)	Connotation
de Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley (1998)	A brand is a “complex multidimensional construct whereby managers augment products and services with values and this facilitates the process by which consumers confidently recognise and appreciate these values” (p.427)	Connotation
de Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley, (1998): Literature review	Brand as a legal instrument; logo; company; shorthand; risk reducer; identity system; image in consumer’s mind; value system; personality; relationship; adding value; evolving entity	Connotation and Denotation
Kapferer (2004)	“A brand is a name that influences buyers, [thus it becomes] a purchase criterion” (p.11);	Denotation
	“A brand is [a] shared desirable and exclusive idea embodied in products, services, places and/or experiences” (p.13)	Connotation
	A brand is also a symbol of quality, and “a culture” with its own set of values (p.108).	Connotation
	“A brand is a relationship” (p.109), and “a customer reflection”, which reflects the type of consumer who uses it (p.110)	Connotation
Keller (2008)	A brand is “a perceptual entity rooted in reality, but it is more than that, it reflects the perceptions even the idiosyncrasies of consumers... A brand is something that resides in the minds of consumers” (p.3)	Connotation
Muehlbacher and Hemetsberger (2008)	A brand is a complex social phenomenon	Connotation
O’Guinn and Muñiz (2010)	Brands are meanings, socially constructed meanings	Connotation
Simoes and Dibb (2001)	Brand as incorporating “a set of product or service features that are associated with that particular brand name (Baker, 1999) and identifies the product/service in the market (Cooke, 1996)” (p.218)	Connotation/Denotation

Another connotative perspective views “*a brand [as] a cluster of functional and emotional values that enables organizations to make a promise about a unique and welcomed experience*” (de Chernatony et al. 2011, p.31). This interpretation privileges the organisation as the principal agent who decides the value of a brand – as embodied in the values and promise – yet evidence abounds that brands and their value are socially produced (e.g. Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001; O’Guinn and Muñiz, 2010; Schau et al., 2009; Schau and Muñiz 2002). de Chernatony et al. (2011) explanation also underscores the instrumental role of *brand* in realising a particular outcome just for the organisation alone, without drawing a clear link to crucial stakeholders such as consumers, inter alia. The liberal palette of definitions has prompted some scholars to caution against radical reinterpretations of brands, urging that definitions should be of “*managerial relevance*” through focusing on “*the interface between theory and practice*” (Brodie and de Chernatony, 2009, p.99).

However, a close scrutiny of the various interpretations reveals that the multiple elaborations are not mutually exclusive. The notion of meaning attached to an entity is the nexus among the rival understandings. Hence brands are clusters of meaning (Batey, 2008) attributed to entities such as people, places, ideas and things (Stern, 2006), in order to serve particular socio-economic goals. Moreover, anything can be branded (Stern, 2006), from things such as physical goods and services, to: organisations like the United Nations and Greenpeace; ideas such as organic; places like towns, cities, nations and regions, and; people, for instance politicians, athletes and entertainers (also see Keller, 2008; Olins, 2003). Even dirt itself can be branded (O’Guinn and Muñiz, 2009). Olins (2003) believes branding to be ubiquitous. However as Kapferer (2004) goes on to add, “*there is always a tangible object*

represented by a brand, which may be a corporation, place, product or service” (p.10) or a human being – although ideas may be intangible. We therefore talk of place brands and corporate brands, and refer to concepts and people as brands.

Putting meaning at the heart of the analysis of *brand*, demands specification of what the latter construct (*meaning*) represents. For some scholars, the meaning attached to a market offering is the value that consumers ascribe to some knowledge set pertaining to the object (e.g. Berthon et al., 2009; Keller, 1998 and 2003; Keller and Lehmann, 2006). Put another way, this suggests that the meaning of a market offering is the value of the knowledge about the product, person, place or thing to the customer, not the knowledge itself. However, this perspective appears misguided since it implies that not ‘valuing’ particular knowledge about an entity would make the latter devoid of any ‘meaning’ for the knower. Other scholars perceive the meaning of a market offering as its image held by the consumer in his or her head (Aaker, 1996). Yet, the complexity of this view emanates from the introduction of an additional concept, namely image, which represents one of the two elements of brand knowledge, with the other being brand awareness (Keller, 2008). Therefore, interpreting the meaning of a market offering as synonymous with its image appears to partially capture the richness of the construct.

Batey (2008) attempts to diffuse the complexity of defining the meaning of a market offering by elaborating that, it can be broadly abstracted at two levels as primary and implicit. Primary meaning is the summation of the consumer’s dominant associations and perceptions about a brand, predominantly based on the perceived brand’s direct benefits and physical attributes (ibid.). Batey (2008) proceeds with an interesting

description of implicit brand meaning as the ultimate emotional and psychological significance of a brand to a consumer. Implicit brand meaning is a complex and highly symbolic interpretation, contingent upon cultural norms and values (ibid.). It is the force which serves as the nexus between the consumer and the brand, and empowers the individual to organise and make sense of his or her environment (McCracken, 1986a). Indeed, brands are meaningful to customers, based on both their functional and symbolic aspects (Olins, 2003). Although providing useful insights, Batey's (2008) premise is still customer-centric, which however has merit, given that brands need customers and vice versa (Olins, 2003). Yet recent studies provide evidence in support of numerous stakeholders or society members' collective engagement with a brand in ways that potentially interfere with its performance on the marketplace (e.g. Luedicke, 2006).

In their rather radical thesis on brands as complex social phenomena, Muehlbacher and Hemetsberger (2008) contend that the meaning of a brand is a dynamic collective system of knowledge and evaluations constantly produced by the social discourse among members of a brand interest group (ibid.). A brand interest group may comprise of brand owners (shareholders), consumers/customers and their advocates, employees and their representatives, consumers of competitive brands, competitors, celebrities, journalists and the media (Muehlbacher and Hemetsberger, 2008; also see Luedicke, 2006a). Their integrative thesis goes beyond an appreciation of what Firat and Venkatesh (1995) depict as the contemporary social dynamics of brand consumption. It reflects on the complexity of brands as objects that are subject to social interaction and negotiation among diverse collectives. Thereby, Muehlbacher and Hemetsberger's (2008) thesis points to the potential co-

existence of multiple meanings for a market offering as observed elsewhere, for instance by Kates and Goh (2003), and Luedicke (2006). This arguably adds a novel dimension to our analysis; if brands are meanings given to market offerings and such meanings can be diverse, then a crucial question that arises is on the evolutions of such meanings. In other words, our debate shifts to an engagement with the branding process itself as subsequently reviewed.

2.3. Branding: Marketer domain or interactive process?

Conventionally, the development of a brand, or more technically the process of branding is conceived of as a managerial praxis (Stern, 2006; Batey, 2008). The branding process commences with the marketer devising brand plans “*and results in consumers choosing brands, based on their perceptions about the fit between their values and their needs*” (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo-Riley, 1998, p.435). The marketer is chiefly tasked with defining the brand focusing on its identity, and communicating it to target audiences (Aaker 1996; Kapferer, 2004). As a specified internal understanding of who/what the brand is and what it stands for, as well as its uniqueness (Kapferer, 2004), the brand identity distinctively underscores both tangible and intangible features of the market offering (Aaker, 1996). Hence part of strategic brand management involves the creation of a unique set of brand associations that the marketer aspires to convey and maintain in the marketplace (Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 2004).

Aaker (1996) further illuminates that a brand identity consists of two layers, the core and extended realm. The core identity is the soul of the brand, which is comprised of significantly unique beliefs and values kept by the marketer as a constant set of

associations across time and space (ibid.). The core identity is what best characterises, and fundamentally drives the brand (Keller, 2008). On the other hand, the extended brand identity is contextually and spatially determined by the marketer, based on the dynamics of the market with which it should resonate. The extended identity is constituted of associations that “*provide texture and completeness*” to the brand across markets (Aaker 1996, p.68-69) and, hence permits the brand to carry multiple identities whilst maintaining its core. The marketer may seek to create and convey associations in the form of the six facets identified by Kapferer (2004) in his ‘identity prism’ as: I) Physique: brand’s physical features, appearance, function(s) and recognition; II) Personality: the brand’s character, based on human traits; III) Culture: the system of values and basic principles that guide the brand, some of which may be associated with the brand’s country of origin, e.g. ‘made in Britain’; IV) Relationship: the social bond signified by a brand, e.g. relationship between a parent and his/her child that a brand symbolises; V) Reflection (of the consumer): the ‘typical’ consumer or user of the brand, and; VI) Self-image: the mirror of understanding that the user/consumer has of his/herself.

Because brand identity captures the brand’s purpose, meaning and self-image, it acts as the key driver of brand positioning by providing the marketer with answers to the key question of: “*A brand for what, whom, when and against whom*” (Kapferer, 2004, p.99-100). However, when the marketer communicates his/her brand identity to target audiences, the identity is translated into an image of the market offering as perceived by the audiences. These market actors or observers decode and synthesize bits and pieces of information signalled by the offering’s logo, name, and processes such as advertising inter alia, into a gestalt of what they come to believe the brand to

be, in a simple process of sense making. In other words, identity originates from the sender's side, while image is on the receiver's side (Kapferer, 2004), and there exists a time lapse between brand identity and brand image. By articulating how the brand should be seen on the basis of key differentiating factors such as the roots and heritage (ibid.), an identity can be thought of as aspirational, or a future oriented outcome (Aaker, 1996). In contrast, the image reflects the past and present perception of the brand, given that the former is based on how the latter was and is experienced, as ingrained in market players' minds (ibid.).

Furthermore, the interference of marketplace 'noise' with the signals conveyed by the marketer often result in a mismatch between brand identity and brand image. A brand image is seldom an accurate reflection of its conceived identity, if at all, and this presents a challenge that the marketer constantly endeavours to neutralise. Hence the creation and communication of a brand identity reflects a key managerial process that persistently demands consistence of all messages conveyed by the semiotic devices available to the marketer across media, in order to minimise the polluting impact of the marketplace noise upon the communicated identity (Kapferer, 2004).

Apart from aiming to establish a clear position for the brand in the marketplace, there are several other motives for ensuring that the brand appears with a single voice. For instance, the way the consumer sees the brand will determine the form of relationship that potentially evolves between the individual and the brand in question (Fournier, 1998). Brand-consumer relationships are based on meaning (ibid.), and brand identity operates as the essence of that meaning (Aaker 1996; Kapferer, 2004). Therefore, the clearer and more consistent the brand messages are, the clearer and

more stable the meaning of the brand to the consumers, and the more solid is the relationship, potentially. One of the prime goals of the marketer is therefore to create and project a brand identity that holds meaning for the perceiver. A brand that carries meaning for a consumer is valuable to that individual. As Aaker (1996) consequently stresses, the management of brand value revolves around the development of an appealing brand image (Aaker, 1996).

Up until the early 1990s the notion of the marketer as the monopolistic branding agent prevailed rather unchallenged, passing as what Christodoulides (2007) describes as the dominant industrial paradigm. A gradual departure from this viewpoint is manifesting as researchers increasingly pay more attention to consumer collectives online. Engagement with such collectives is inspired by some pioneering studies on consumer/user-generated product innovations, which reveal that consumers voluntarily participate in and collectively contribute innovative solutions and ideas to market offerings (e.g. von Hippel, 2009). These observations, together with the substantial volume of field evidence delivered in the period between 1995 and 2010, strongly support the idea that brands and their value are co-created by marketers, consumers and other stakeholders (e.g. Cova and Cova, 2002; Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Muñiz and Schau, 2007; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001; O'Guinn and Muñiz, 2010; Schau and Muñiz, 2002; Schau et al., 2009; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Among others, these scholars are in agreement with Luedicke's (2006a) conclusion that the dominance of marketers in defining the meaning of brands is starting to evaporate. Indeed, "*branding as we know it*" may be "*about to collapse*" (Blumenthal, 2005, p.148) given that brands are never created by marketers alone (O'Guinn and Muñiz, 2010). Rather, brands are socially

constructed by diverse members of society (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001). This view is reflected in the notion of the development of corporate brands as either based upon, or demanding the collaboration of multiple stakeholders (e.g. de Chernatony and Harris, 2000; Gregory, 2007; Pitt et al., 2006). While de Chernatony and Harris (2000) emphasise the need to integrate employee output, Gregory (2007) introduces the concept of 'negotiated corporate brand', arguing that both internal and external stakeholder groups should be viewed as strategic partners who participate in the development of a corporate brand "*through a process of dialogue and negotiation*" (p.62). Pitt et al. (2006) introduce the idea of corporate brands from an open source perspective, propounding that we are witnessing an era of consumer movement from passive to active producers of the corporate brand and its value. Thus, due to their twin role as consumers and producers, consumers are to be viewed as 'prosumers' actively co-creating not just product innovation but the brand as well (ibid.).

There are two points to underline in connection with the abstraction of brands as socially constructed, as both revealed and implied by the studies cited above (e.g. Gregory, 2007; O'Guinn and Muñiz, 2010; Pitt et al., 2006,) among others. Firstly, the historical development of such scholarly thinking becomes essential to our understanding and evaluation of the alternative brand conception steadily gaining traction among scholars. The perception of brands as subject to social processes is grounded in the sociological philosophising of Berger and Luckmann (1966), which views meaning as a product of social interaction that attains establishment as the reality by, and for, members of a given social group. Corroborating Alfred Schutz's²

²Schutz's (1932) thesis "Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt: Eine Einleitung in die verstehende Soziologie" was later translated into English as The Phenomenology of the Social World (1967).

thesis originally published in German in 1932 and translated to English in 1967, Berger and Luckmann (1966) reject the idea that meanings ‘exist as given’ and are universal. They argue that members of a society or collective negotiate and establish the meaning of a phenomenon that they know (the thing known), to the extent of legitimising the agreed upon interpretation as the reality (albeit just for the collective). They emphasize the centrality of knowledge, maintaining that any meaning is based on, and constituted of knowledge about a phenomenon embedded within the socio-cultural formations of a given collective, with that knowledge being passed from one member to the other, including future generations (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Secondly, and as a consequence of engagement with ideas presented directly above, marketers initiate the meaning making process, when they create a market offering and deliver it to the marketplace. The generation of academics appealing for the adoption of a sociological branding paradigm therefore propounds that the marketer has the capacity to create a brand by coding a meaning for a marketing offering which he/she then communicates to the marketplace through various techniques (O’Guinn and Muñiz, 2010). An organisation may start by defining the brand based on a collective internal understanding of the core values embedded within the organisation (Gregory, 2007). However, the marketer does not have an overarching influence upon the evolution of the brand in the marketplace, beyond defining its dynamics internally. The development of a brand in the marketplace is subject to social negotiation: Meanings are socially debated by consumer collectives in a persistent process of reviewing information related to the respective market offering, and integrating new episodes or experiences shared by the members of the social

group (Kozinets, 2010; Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001; O’Guinn and Muñiz, 2010; Schau et al., 2009).

Often, market offerings take on meanings of their own, far from those originally invented and intended by the marketer. Hence as the main source of meaning:

“Brand identity is co-created with consumers and other stakeholders and this element of co-creation is especially apparent in consumer groups...these groups become active carriers of brand meaning, rather than followers of the company's idea of the constitution of their brand”
(Payne et al. 2009, p.380).

The observation that marketers and organisations have limited control over the meanings acquired by market offerings (Pitt et al., 2006), signifies that apart from legal entitlements such as trademarks, marketers neither own nor control brands (O’Guinn and Muñiz 2010). Rather, society does, and marketers are only one element of society (ibid). The same line of scholarly thought also challenges the presumption that the marketer not only creates the meaning but also the value of a brand. Jones (2005) maintains that brand value is co-created by marketers and other stakeholders such as consumers. In concurring with Jones (2005), Merz et al. (2009) object to the conventional treatment of brand value from what they label as a ‘goods dominant logic’. Traditionally, the ‘goods dominant logic’ sees firms as the marketplace actors who produce value through the production of goods and services (Merz et al., 2009) while consumers tend to be viewed as destroyers of the created value (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). The marketplace itself is an interesting platform

for envisioning the debate on brand value in two additional ways: Firstly, it is a place where a brand is transacted or exchanged. Therefore, the marketplace acts as the mechanism or socio-economic context that bestows any market offering with its legitimacy as a brand. Such exchange is facilitated by the perceived (or ‘objective’) value of the brand (Arvidsson, 2005 and 2006; Jones, 2005). Secondly, the marketplace also discriminates between those who produce and provide (that is, marketers) and those who consume or use the market offering (cf. Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). This production/consumption dichotomy leads to the misconception of the marketer as the sole value-creator (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995), while consumers are often regarded, erroneously, as exogenous to value creation (Merz et al., 2009).

Jones (2005) contends that brand value is a multifarious construct defined and affected by a whole range of relationships among social actors (ibid.). Marketers partially influence the value of a market offering through pricing strategies among other promotion tools. The bedrock of the value of a brand is formed by a combination of all processes, activities and initiatives undertaken by consumers and other interest groups in association with meaning-making (Arvidsson, 2006). Indeed, brand value is a social construct, and this is most evident in financial markets where the concretisation of immaterial qualities as the ‘true’ and ‘real’ properties of a brand contributes to the production and perception of certain economic value (ibid.). From this perspective, the marketplace is instrumental in determining brand value financially as reflected by “*cash flow, revenues, market share, stock price (and) value in a sale*” (Merz et al., 2009, p. 336). Jones (2005) goes on to reiterate that financially, brand value is therefore reflected by brand equity. However, this is of

interest mainly to the marketer (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2008). Firat and Venkatesh (1995) not only declare these observation misguided in their approach towards capturing the notion of brand value, but also advance a postmodern tenet, privileging consumption as a means to an end not a mere end in itself. They maintain that in every episode of consumption, *“something is produced: an object, the person,”* (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995, p.251). Consumers employ brands to accomplish specific goals and objectives. For instance, consumers use brands not just for their *“use value”* but also for their *“linking value”*, with the latter understood as the capacity of brands to foster bonds between individuals (Cova and Cova, 2020, p.600). Consumption therefore becomes a value generative process (ibid.), of which the produced value is *“uniquely and phenomenologically determined”* by the consumer, implying that brand marketers can only make value propositions rather than deliver value (Merz et al., 2009, p.329). Thus a consumer always acts as a value co-creator (Payne et al., 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000 and 2004) because brands are significant to individuals, collectives and organisations alike: *“Brands are part of consumers’ lives and organisations’ strategies”* (Simoes and Dibb, 2001, p.220).

2.4. The significance of brands

Brands play a variety of important roles (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo-Riley, 1998a) and thereby generate a spectrum of benefits for diverse stakeholders (Keller and Lehmann, 2006) who may be individuals and consumer collectives or social groups simply involved with a given brand. A large volume of literature however puts emphasis on the significance of brands to organisations and consumers. For an organisation, a brand serves as a source of wealth (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo-

Riley, 1998a). As long as a brand is clearly differentiated and competitive, it allows an organisation to: fend off competition through the establishment of customer loyalty; charge premium prices given that consumers will be assured of a consistent good quality; introduce new marketing offerings as brand extensions, enter new markets and define market standards such as innovation, as a result of the credibility and reputation of the brand in the marketplace; and consequently achieve growth objectives inter alia (for a review, see, Aaker, 1991; de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo-Riley 1998; de Chernatony et al., 2011; Kapferer, 2004; Keller, 2008). For a corporate brand, its values (as a core dimension of identity) act as the blueprint that directs employees in their interaction with diverse brand interest groups in varying contexts. Corporate brand values provide more than guidelines by functioning as the glue that unites employee around the corporate vision and objectives. In the main, a (strong) brand is therefore the most valuable intangible asset available to an organisation that guarantees strong financial returns or social gains over long-term (Aaker, 1991; de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo-Riley, 1998; Kapferer, 2004; Keller, 2008).

At the consumer level, a brand signals and promises a specific quality, thereby orienting the individual and simplifying his/her choices (Aaker, 1996; Keller and Lehmann, 2006). A “*brand that achieves a defined position in the market place*” (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo-Riley, 1998, p.95) reduces consumer risk (Keller, 2008). Historically, the issue of risk has always been of major consumer concern as observed by Olins (2003). Kapferer (2004) among others, categorises the latent forms of risk that consumers seek to mitigate via the use of brands as follows:

- I) Functional, which is related to performance failure of the offering, or deviation from its promised performance standard.
- II) Physical, in that the product may pose a threat to the health of the user.
- III) Financial, which is associated with the price, in particular where the price paid for the product is not considered justified.
- IV) Social, that involves the potential sense of embarrassment that the user may receive from peer groups for using the product.
- V) Psychological, in the sense that the product may cause distress and/or affect the mental well-being of the user, as well as form the user's self-image (also see, de Chernatony et al. 2011).
- VI) Time related risk entailing the opportunity costs of having to replace the product where it is considered to have failed to perform as anticipated (also see, Keller, 2008).

A brand minimises such risks through a combination of functional and emotional values that promise the user a consistent and unique experience (de Chernatony et al. 2011).

However, brands play a deeply meaningful role beyond facilitating consumers with carrying out transactions in the marketplace. Brands deliver a combination of psychological and social benefits to consumers, apart from risk reduction. Such benefits accrue from the perceived symbolic relevance of brands, which serves as a bridge to shared cultural meanings within society (McCracken, 1986b). Some brands have therefore become icons (Holt, 2004) that consumers draw on to organise their social world. Brands instil a sense of belonging, distinction and identity in individual consumers (e.g. Aaker, 1997; Belk 1988; Holt, 1995; Fournier, 1998; Levy, 1959;

Parker, 2009) as well as in consumer collectives (Cova and Cova, 2002; Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001; Schau and Muñiz, 2002; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Consumers use brands as symbols (Levy, 1959) and relationship partners (Fournier, 1998) that reinforce individual/social identities and give meaning to life. The role and significance of *brand* is therefore concretised through social practices, which include the process of brand co-creation particularly by consumers in social groups hosted on the Internet (Kozinets, 1997, 2002, 2010; Schau et al., 2009).

As documented by consumer culture theorists³ (e.g. Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Kozinets, 2002 and 2010; Schau et al., 2009), it is the desire for individuals to connect authentically with their given brands, which leads to deeper and extensive involvement with such entities in groups that gather on the Internet. In seeking authentic relationships with brands, consumers attempt to limit the role of marketers as cultural engineers who create meanings, impose these upon consumers and thus tell them what to be and/or how to live (Holt, 2002). Indeed, as stated elsewhere, marketing activities and programs are designed to influence “*the customer “mindset” with the respect to the brand – what they [customers] know and feel about the brand*”, (Keller and Lehmann, 2003, p.27). Consumer desires, feelings, and thoughts are consequently determined by marketers through brands (ibid.). Traditionally marketers “*inside large companies*” created brands “*to seduce customers – to sell products...*” (Olins, 2003, p.15). However, the postmodern

³Consumer culture theorists are a generation of scholars who give precedence to ideological, socio-cultural, symbolic and experiential dimensions of consumption, rather than the economic dimensions (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

consumers are literate (Bengtsson and Firat, 2006), active market participants who decipher the cultural authority claimed by marketers (Holt, 2002), and make efforts towards weakening such influence through brand co-creation. Consumers (as well as other brand interest groups) therefore tend to endow market offerings with their own particularized meanings particularly within online communities as demonstrated by Cova and Cova (2002), Kates (2004), Kates and Goh (2003), Luedicke (2006) and Thompson et al. (2006).

2.5. Brand co-creation in online communities

Brand interest groups such as consumers tend to participate more effectively in the co-creation of meanings and value of market offerings collectively within online communities (Hatch and Schultz, 2010). Hence brand co-creation manifests more visibly within such communities. Kozinets (2002 and 2010) notes that the term online community is often used interchangeably with virtual community and computer-mediated community as reference to a group of people who interact with each other on the Internet on the basis of a shared interest (Hagel and Armstrong, 1997). Although online communities are increasingly popular objects of academic inquiry (e.g. McLelland, 2002; Sade-Beck, 2004; Schau et al., 2009; Rokka, 2010; Xun and Reynolds, 2010), there is an element of controversy on whether they can be treated as ‘communities’ in the conventional sense of the concept (Komito, 2001; Kozinets, 2002). The disagreement may be due to the difficulty in defining community itself particularly given that, *“the things that community has traditionally represented are sites of considerable contestation in the postmodern world”* (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001, p.428). Besides that, there are incompatible viewpoints regarding the fundamental and *“essential elements of ‘community’ and whether*

virtual communities possess or lack such essentials” (Komito, 2001, p.117). The complexity of defining ‘community’ is exemplified by Hillery’s (1955) sampling of ninety-four, albeit non-exhaustive definitions of the concept. The scholar notes that social interaction or the presence of a group of people with social relations reflects the common feature among the many interpretations (Hillery, 1955).

The other aspects fundamental to the traditional understandings of community include the presence of a geographic area within which social interaction occurs, or which facilitates communication (Hillery, 1955). This signifies that a ‘community’ is geographically confined (ibid.). However, when social interaction is situated on the world-wide-web, geography becomes less of a restrictive factor as individuals, acquaintances, friends, families and researchers are technologically facilitated in their communication with one another, even globally. There may be limitations with regards to physical contact among individuals online. However the issue of group interaction as being solely contingent upon geographic area ignores that digital media cuts through boundaries, thereby making online communities more accessible to interested individuals at a broader scale. Hence the Internet has transformed into a social territory in its own right.

Hillery (1955) also identifies self-sufficiency of the community, common life among members of the community, the prevalence of common ends, norms, and means among members, and consciousness of kind as the other markers of a ‘community’ in what may be viewed as the conventional sense. These features tend to be observable within online communities as well, given that firstly, members are often drawn together by a common goal or interest (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). Membership in

an online platform where a topic of shared interest is discussed, indeed qualifies as a shared feature among individuals within the specific community. Secondly, the self-sustenance of any community becomes transparent through continued interaction at least until members decide to dissolve the community for any reason (Kozinets, 2010; O'Guinn and Muñiz 2010). Similarly, online community members tend to propagate and sustain their interaction over time (Rheingold, 2000) partly based on an 'imagined sense of likeness' despite lack of physical contact among the individuals. A number of scholars have discovered that an imagined sense of likeness emerges among community members on the basis of their involvement with a phenomenon that congregates them on a distinct online platform in the first place (e.g. Hine, 2000; Markham, 2005; McLelland, 2002; Sade-Beck, 2004; Schau et al., 2009; Rokka, 2010). The imagined similarity suffices as glue that binds individuals together and facilitates their social interaction virtually over time (ibid.). Indeed, the notion of imagined similar others is pivotal to the formation and continuation of any community. Anderson (1991) underlines this perspective when he asserts that even nations themselves are imagined political communities in the sense that:

“The members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion... all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined...Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined”
(Anderson, 1991, p.7).

Within the domain of marketing, researchers who have explored virtually enacted social interactions argue that online communities are ‘real’ territories where people draw meaningful experiences, derive identities and generate relationships that extend beyond the brand and the boundaries of the Internet (Kozinets, 2010; Schau et al., 2009). Moreover, not only are online communities valuable resources for consumers (Kim and Jin, 2006) and marketers alike (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000) who both get intelligence on brand consumption, but also, they are dynamically shaping the brand paradigm (Christodoulides, 2007) consumer-brand relationships (Lawer and Knox, 2006; Muñiz and Schau, 2007, Schau et al., 2009) and the trajectories of product innovation (Fueller et al., 2007; Fueller et al., 2008). Furthermore, research evidence reveals that online communities are indeed characterised by group-specific knowledge, values, beliefs, ideas and behaviours (e.g. Kozinets 2010; Schau et al., 2009). All these factors provide a sense of commonality among members interested in a distinct topic or issue. Also in their combination, the dimensions constitute a shared basis for social action concerning the brand should there be cause for such an engagement (e.g. Kozinets 2010; Luedicke, 2006; Schau et al., 2009). Thus in view of such observations, our analysis of brands and brand-related virtual discourses should not be hindered by some lingering doubts regarding the proper conceptualization of the label community, if the features noted by the above cited research on online communities are identifiable in the set-ups potential for investigation.

During interaction, members of online communities engage in various social actions, either intended to enhance the brand consumption experience, or interpret the brand from their perspectives (e.g. Luedicke, 2006; Schau and Muñiz, 2002). Such actions

can be classified as ‘virtual discourse’, which entail a range of discursive interaction, storytelling and verbal exchanges undertaken by members of an online community (Jones and Rafael 2000, 2000a; Matei, 2005) in connection with brand co-creation. The quality of virtual discourses performed within a distinct online community potentially defines the value consumers provide to, and derive from the community. For example, Schau et al. (2009) identify four thematic categories of practices that generate value for community members as follows:

- I) Social networking, which seeks to foster bonds among brand community members. It reinforces *“the social or moral bonds within the community”* (p.34).
- II) Impression management, which is concerned with developing favourable impressions for the brand to outsiders.
- III) Community engagement that reflects the degree of members’ involvement with the brand community itself (not the brand) leading to the accumulation of social capital by individuals within the community.
- IV) Brand use practices that focus on improving or enhancing the use of the respective brand, for instance through sharing advice on how to look after or maintain the brand (Schau et al., 2009).

While the bulk of studies on brand co-creation have presented the practice in a positive light, Arvidsson (2005) makes an exception. The scholar alleges that co-creation tends to financially benefit the firm, its shareholders and managers more than consumers. These claims appear merited to a certain extent. For instance, in his work on ‘democratising innovation’ von Hippel (2009) establishes that consumers

voluntarily collaborate in the designing of new products, and are willing to share such ‘open source innovations’ with firms without demanding or seeking any financial rewards. Fueller et al. (2008), present further evidence supporting the idea that consumers assume volunteer roles within organisations’ value chains, without demanding monetary compensation. According to Vargo and Lusch (2004), organisations derive added brand value by creatively using co-operative consumers as operant resources. As a result, Arvidsson (2005) believes that co-creation represents a form of consumer qualitative and quantitative exploitation. Qualitatively, firms exploit consumers by using their creative communication to establish desired meaning and value in order to improve the perceived quality of a brand. Quantitatively, co-creation becomes a form of exploitation by using consumers’ time to produce value for organisations without compensation. The researcher goes on to assert that co-creation therefore translates into “*unpaid immaterial labour as a source of surplus value*” for the organisation and its shareholders (Arvidsson, 2005, p.252).

A common limitation across the various studies briefly outlined above is their inclination towards putting the marketer or firm at the centre of the analysis, yet there are cases where brands grow as community driven entities without the participation of either party (Fournier and Lee, 2009). However there is always clear ownership of the brand (ibid.). Interestingly, *brand Africa* represents a good example of a brand that seems to just ‘exist’ without a clearly identified marketer or owner, as noted in the introductory part of this thesis. Moreover, research appears to remain strikingly silent on how co-creation evolves in the context of place brands, and the

potential value generated by a given place brand for the members of the online community among others.

2.6. Chapter summary

This chapter has started off by underlining the fluidity of the brand construct and its evolution over the last century. It has been argued that the notion of meaning serves as the nexus among diverse brand interpretations. A brand has therefore been defined as a cluster of meanings attributed to an entity such as product, person, place or organisation to serve specific socio-economic goals. This contention has been further supported by the claim that brands are not invented by marketers alone, but are socially constructed by multiple stakeholders during interaction. While appreciating the competitive understandings of meaning within the context of *brand*, this chapter has adopted as a basis of this thesis, the definition of meaning as a dynamic collective system of knowledge and evaluations constantly produced by the social discourse among members of a brand interest group (Muehlbacher and Hemetsberger, 2008). It has been emphasised that branding has therefore transformed into a collaborative process between brand interests groups, as brands are significant to both firms and individuals.

Extending the review to place brands, the assertion has been made that researchers have so far integrated the factor of meaning co-creation in their investigations of other forms of brands while overlooking the former. There is still lack of empirically backed-up studies on how online communities potentially engage in place brand co-creation. Yet akin to any other types of brands, place brands matter to consumers and

other brands interest groups as potential sources of value as discussed in the next chapter.

3. CONCEPTUAL ELABORATION: PLACE BRANDS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“Although a nation is a cacophony of images, in certain cases it is possible to speak of a dominant image, an image powerful enough to crowd out all the other meanings and resonance”
(O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2000, p.59).

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is devoted to an analysis of place brands with the aim to expound their evolution and potential roles. Drawing on studies that juxtapose places with corporations (e.g. Kavaratzis 2004, 2005 and 2009) the chapter proclaims that, in essence places are potentially marketable entities that bear images, identities and multiple stakeholders (akin to corporations). Therefore the chapter addresses the conventional utilisation of the corporate brand paradigm as a foundation for theorising about and managing place brands. Overlaps between these two forms of brands are identified in the analysis of place identity and the constitution of place meaning. Based on literature drawn from diverse disciplines, the chapter argues that place meanings are socially constructed mainly by place marketers and the media as these agents often have access to the strategic resources for brand building. It is noted that place meanings are however complex and multifarious, and a few examples such as the notions of ‘Europe’, ‘Europeaness’ and ‘brand Europe’ are featured to support the unfolding argument.

The chapter further expands into a review of the idea of supranational place brands and the various goals of place branding. This leads to an engagement with the

construct of sustainable development, and a discussion of Africa, its image and development.

3.2. Places as brands

Places are organised worlds of meaning (Tuan, 1977), where diverse forms of socio-cultural and economic activities occur (Currid and Williams, 2010; Forsberg, 2003; Paasi, 2001). A multitude of activities that are undertaken within a given place (potentially) engenders a sense of security and belonging in individuals, while enriching their lives with purpose and meaning (Tuan, 1977). This resembles the conception of corporations as meaningful centres of human interaction where individuals spend part of their daily lives, potentially resulting in the formation of strong bonds between the individuals and their organisations (Terez, 2000). Indeed, places that are as large as, or larger than cities “*have many similarities with large commercial corporations*” (Ashworth, 2008, p.6) and “*all places can be seen as brands*” (Boisen et al. 2011, p.142). The categorisation of places as brands is founded upon the knowledge that there prevails a few market related dimensions between places and corporations, and therefore between place and corporate brands (Kavaratzis, 2004, 2005 and 2009; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). For instance, similar to corporations, places have identities, images and equity (Kotler and Gertner, 2002) that can all be managed and marketed to create value for multiple stakeholders (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005).

Interestingly, the idea of places as brands appears to be trapped in a struggle to win legitimacy from researchers and their deeper appreciation of the subject (e.g. Aronczyk, 2009). Conventionally, places (e.g. Britain or India) are not services,

goods or commodities that can be branded and sold (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000). Copyright laws are therefore rarely, if at all applicable to places (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). For this reason among others, viewing places from a branding perspective lies beyond the norm (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000). Yet places have always been 'branded' at least through naming (Anholt, 2010). Place names are rich with meanings that influence (international) public opinions (ibid.). Internationally, country names are imbued with symbolic meanings that can fundamentally impact upon the interaction between potential consumers/audiences and the place or the products and services offered by the place (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Places names are created based on a number of phenomena that may include superstitions, religions, history, aspired future direction of the place, outsiders' sentiments (Anholt, 2010) and even geographical features. For instance, while "Burkina Faso means *"land of upright people"* (p.5), which can be interpreted as the land of people of integrity, Albania is the *"white country – referring to its mountain peaks"* (Anholt, 2010, p.5). In principal, any given place name carries associations and connotations for individuals, some of them more salient others less so (Boisen et al., 2011).

Connotations and associations articulate the identity of a place and the competitiveness of a place brand hinges upon identity (Anholt, 2010) in the same sense that the latter is accorded a high significance in corporations (Kavaratzis, 2005 and 2009; also cf. Balmer, 1995 and 2001). Identity forms the heart of a place brand (Rainisto, 2003) and all places have identities (Anholt, 2010; Mayes, 2008). Place identity evolves from group experiences, as well as the intrinsic features and history of the place, including the individuals' relationship to those dimensions (Mayes,

2008). The construction and (re)negotiation of place identity follows on the basis of prevailing socio-cultural dynamics of the place in question as experienced by the inhabitants (Go and Govers, 2009; Mayes, 2008). Hence, place identity derives from the input provided by local residents, and it symbolises (or should symbolise) their collective understanding of the place as insiders (Go and Govers, 2009). However, the focus on socio-cultural dimensions appears to neglect the role of physical attributes in shaping place identity. If Albania for instance is partly defined by its natural environment as implied by Anholt (2010), then geographical features can express particular aspects of a place's identity. Zavattaro's (2010) hints at this possibility in asserting that landscapes and architecture inscribe places with meanings.

The conception of place identity as comprised of socio-cultural and geographical connotations is also reflected in the scholarship on corporate identity. Marketing researchers maintain that the corporate identity – as a “*set of meanings by which a company allows itself to be known and through which it allows people to describe, remember and relate to it...*” (Melewar, 2003, p.195) – enables the organisation “*or a part of it [to] feel that it truly exists and that it is a coherent and unique being, with a history and place of its own*” (Kapferer, 2004, 97). The “*meanings*” (Melewar, 2003, p.195) are manifested by tangible (e.g. logos) and non-tangible (e.g. employee behaviours) elements of the organisation (Kapferer, 2004). Values lie at the core of the corporation's identity and they serve as the source of collective experiences among the members of the corporation, thereby minimising fragmentation (Ind, 1997). Corporate branding is viewed as offering a cohesive and integrated approach for brand building, particularly where an organisation deals with fragmented entities

(Balmer, 1995 and 2001; de Chernatony, 1999 and 2002; Schultz et al., 2000). Fragmentation is equally pertinent to places given that they comprise of diverse stakeholders (Merrilees et al., 2012), regions and activities (Anholt 2006 and 2010; Olins, 2003). Therefore akin to a corporate brand, a place brand requires a shared identity (Kavaratzis, 2005 and 2009; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005) in order to minimise the heterogeneity of experiences (cf. Ind, 1997). Place branding consequently revolves around the creation and communication of a compelling place identity based on substance (Olins, 2003). Also it is the process of branding a place that allows the identity to become more visual, and distinguish the place as attractive in the eyes of stakeholders (Anholt, 2010; Mayes, 2008). A competitive place brand identity is therefore partly developed through the strategic communication of the key differentiation features that resonate with stakeholders (Hankinson, 2004).

Trueman et al. (2004) offer an example to demonstrate the interdependency between corporate and place brand identities, through an assessment of the applicability of Balmer's (2001) AC²ID test to city branding. To reiterate briefly, Balmer (2001) maintains in line with Ind (1997) that organisations are subject to multiple identities, which however should be understood and aligned. The scholar then analyses what he considers to be the typical five identities, arguing that: Firstly, organisations have *actual* identities. An actual identity reflects the current features of an organisation that are influenced by internal values, organisational behaviour, activities, market scope, performance and positioning among others (Balmer, 2001; Balmer and Greyser, 2002). Secondly, organisations are typified by *communicated* identities, as compositions of the diverse organisational messages conveyed through primary, secondary and tertiary communications, which may be viewed in overall as "*total*

corporate communication” (Balmer, 2001, p.276). Thirdly, organisations are characterised by *conceived* identities, which are made up of the images or representations, as well as the reputation of the organisation known by stakeholders and networks (ibid.). As a fourth point, Balmer (2001) advances what he calls *ideal* identities, which represent the most competitive positioning for the organisation within a distinct time period. The fifth, categorised as *desired* identities, reflect the vision(s) articulated by corporate leaders for the organisation (Balmer, 2001). Trueman et al. (2004) subsequently carry out an AC²ID assessment of the rejuvenation measures implemented or that could have been employed by the Bradford city administrators in Britain in their endeavour to revive the place brand. The researchers arrive at the key conclusion that a place brand’s *actual identity* forms as a complex of current commercial activities undertaken, as well as ethnic composition and their interrelations within the place.

While Balmer (2001) advocates the alignment of the five types of identity, Ind (1997, p.3) proclaims that regardless of how an “*organisation defines itself and its decision making, there is still the potential for consumers and other stakeholders to see it differently.*” Trueman et al. (2004) lend support to this presumption, highlighting the challenge embedded in management efforts to match the many identity types for a place brand, and assessing that alignment. Addressing the discrepancy between *communicated* and *actual* identities, the same scholars argue that the consistence of all conveyed messages is as critical for a place as it is for a corporate brand – and for any other brand in general. Moreover, they illustrate the prevalence of notions about *desired* and *ideal identities* for places, in the same vein that corporations espouse such dimensions. The objective to establish unique place

brand identities draws our attention to the idea of place meaning. By emphasising identity, place branding evidently seeks to establish entities that mean something to their stakeholders.

3.3. Place branding: The construction of place meaning

Researchers from diverse fields unanimously view place meanings as not given but socially constructed: For instance, scholars in the area of human geography (Tuan, 1977), rural studies (Abram et al., 1996), environmental psychology (Devine-Wright and Lyons, 1997), public policy (Christiansen et al., 1999) urban and regional studies (Paasi, 2001) and geopolitics (Forsberg, 2003) among several others. Within the marketing domain, a few studies appreciate the formation of corporate identities and brands as a collaborative process among multiple stakeholders (e.g. Ind, 1997; Gregory, 2007; Pitt et al., 2006). However, with the exception of Akindele et al. (2013), there appears to be a lack of research that precisely and thoroughly addresses the subject of social construction in the evolution of such entities. In line with other scholars like O'Guinn and Muñiz (2010), Akindele et al. (2013) argue in favour of the adoption of the social construction epistemological underpinnings as these may be useful to both our understanding and management of brands in the 21st century. Similarly a deficit of research on place branding from a social construction perspective can be detected within place marketing. However, van Ham (2002) insists that the assimilation of the social construction paradigm allows nations and other places to construct their own images, roles and identities as exemplified by the social construction of the US as a political/strategic brand. Apparently taking heed of such observations, a handful of researchers seems to have recently started showing

interest in the analysis of place brands from a social construction perspective (e.g. Aitken and Campelo, 2011; Go and Govers, 2009; Mayes, 2008).

Outside the marketing field, Devine-Wright and Lyons (1997) stress that the meanings associated with a specific place are constructed by multiple groups of people (ibid.). Hence a place seldom, if at all carries a single meaning, but rather multiple interpretations. However, some “*linguistic conceptualisations... merit special attention*” (Forsberg, 2003, p.12) as they impact upon the economic, political and socio-cultural, as well as the geographic features of the place more forcefully than others. Forsberg (2003) substantiates that it is a complex of human beliefs, political and socio-economic actions that endows places with meanings. The same researcher however puts emphasis on territorial borders as symbolic markers of space, concurring with Tuan (1977) on the view that places ‘exist’ and are understood within the context of others. Therefore, borders are sanctioned with distinct meanings that separate and mediate relations between places and social groups (Forsberg, 2003). The same scholar proceeds to describe the role of human agency in the establishment of place meaning as driven by the urge to concretise a sense of existence. He claims that, “*in order to create a presence for ourselves, we need to create a meaningful place where we exist. We identify ourselves with the place where we live*” (Forsberg, 2003, p.13; also see, Tuan, 1977). Places become anchor points for our identities⁴ (Paasi, 2003), thereby shaping the types of relations that evolve between us as individuals and the place in question (Christiansen et al., 1999; Forsberg, 2003).

⁴Identity can be defined as “people’s concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others” (Hogg and Abrams, 1988, p.2).

Individuals' interaction with a given place relies upon the meanings that they attach to it (Tuan, 1977). The perceived value of a place stems from an appreciation of the place "*as a basis of identity for states and ethnic groups*" (Forsberg, 2003, p. 9). Paasi (2001) buttresses this contention through an interrogation of the construct 'Europe'. The researcher asserts that the images of Europe are products of narratives of 'the European identity,' 'Europeanness,' 'European values' and the conceptualisation of 'European space'. The 'European idea' is thus signified not only by the European Union (Christiansen et al., 1999), but also a combination of the union and related experiences (Paasi, 2003). The idea manifests through discourses based on underlying power, interests and goals (ibid.). In other words, the social construction of a place's meaning is effectively reflected by the establishment of 'Europe' as signified by "*polity formation through rules and norms, the transformation of identities, the role of ideas and the uses of language*" – with language denoting the discourses employed (Christiansen et al., 1999, p.528).

Continuing the debate, Paasi (2001) maintains that various social actors such as politicians, business communities, media, governments, teachers and researchers often possess the resources that are key to the construction and establishment of place meanings. Currid and Williams (2010) vividly illustrate this point through their scrutiny of the media's role in what they call amplifying 'buzz' on cultural events that occur in specific places, and come to render those places with dominant meanings. They conclude in agreement with Evans (2003) and Yeoh (2005) that media portrayals of recurring incidents construct particular associations of places as epicentres of arts, culture and entertainment and evidently, as hubs for the generation of socio-cultural value. The media thus promotes certain ideas about a place in a way

that results in the branding of the place as socio-culturally unique from, and more or less significant than, others. For instance, the role of the media in branding Hollywood transcends city branding. Hollywood has arguably come to define America to the outside world (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000), through how it is constantly portrayed by the media globally. This is the case as observed by researchers, even if "*the meanings and values [that are] deployed [may] not [be] core in a prior sense*", but rather designated as such by the initiatives undertaken (Mayes, 2008, p.126).

Another group of marketing scholars note that governments and/or their representatives have access to the key resources for manipulating the meaning of a place (Anholt, 2006 and 2010; Yeoh, 2005; Zavattaro, 2010). For instance, Olins (2003) underlines the key role of political elites in branding nations. Through a brief case analysis of France, the scholar claims that the country strategically embarked on a national branding programme aimed at creating and fostering a national identity. France undertook this initiative at a national level as early as the 18th century and was the first (European) country to do so (Olins, 2003). The country adopted an aggressive approach towards the establishment of a homogenous, consistent and coherent sense of what it meant to be French. However, the ideology was short-lived (ibid.) due to changing political actors and their agendas. Anholt's (2010) observation on strategic place naming by government/national officials also highlights some of the leadership patterns of constructing and establishing place meanings. In unison with other scholars – like Evans (2003), Hankinson (2003), Kavaratzis (2004 and 2005) and Yeoh (2005) – Anholt (2010) further maintains that the exercise of particular kinds of governing structures is in itself a branding process

that empowers authorities to define a place, its intended image and perceived value. Places are, and have always been centres of value where at least biological needs for food, water, and reproduction, inter alia, are catered for (Tuan, 1977), and this is one of the dimensions that place administrators seek to make more visible or dramatise.

Zavattaro (2010) however attacks the perceivably presumptuous role of municipalities as “*public relations*” and “*marketing firms*” (p.191) that oversee the development of their preferable place images. Such images are however far from the ‘social reality’ as exemplified by Detroit (USA) following the collapse of its car industry (ibid.). The scholar believes that the use of “*business-based*” (p.193) discourses and imagery in place branding (e.g. customer, efficiency and total quality management, among others) is driven by the two goals: To sell programmes and services and more importantly, to manufacture place images utilising discourses. In Zavattaro’s (2010) words places then become “*socially constructed realities for their audiences through discourse, rhetoric, and imagery*” (p.197) and “*in a one way nondialogic nature*” (p.199). In close affiliation with this line of argument, Abram et al. (1996) investigate how values and ideals of distinct social classes become embodied in architecture as a means for concretising a favoured place meaning. Assessing what they label as the social construction of ‘Middle England’, the scholars stress that place meanings (associated with a certain social class) become encoded in material objects, which are constructed as symbols of what a place should signify (Abram et al., 1996). The development of symbolic objects in particular has become a popular trend in city branding as typified by the proliferation of diverse forms of architecture, infrastructure and aesthetic landscapes (Yeoh, 2005; Zavattaro, 2010). The “*Asian mega projects*” such as the “*Golden Triangle*” and the “*Petronas*

Twin Towers” in Kuala Lumpur, as well as “*Jakarta’s Gateway Precinct*” represent some of the iconic infrastructure tailored to represent a city’s culture (or the city itself) as global (Yeoh, 2005. p.947).

Other researchers link the above stated trends to what they describe as the commercial exploitation of culture⁵ to ‘manufacture’ new place connotations, in a process whereby place heritage is tapped to fabricate novel cultural experiences (e.g. Currid and Williams, 2010; Evans, 2003; Jones and Wilks-Heeg, 2004; Yeoh, 2005; Trueman et al., 2004; Zavattaro, 2010). Often, governments or marketing consultancies acting on behalf of governments take the lead in using the arts and entertainment as tools for renewing or rejuvenating places (Evans, 2003). However, the practice among leadership of drawing on culture as the source of meaning, and therefore competitive advantage for a place brand is also prevalent within the corporate branding field. Within this realm, culture is treated as a strategic asset that endows an organisation with its distinctive and attractive features (e.g. de Chernatony 1999 and 2002; Ind, 1997; Hatch et al., 2000). The brand marketer works to create “*a strategically appropriate culture*” which provides the corporate brand with some intangibility that cannot be imitated by competitors (de Chernatony, 1999; p.164).

Nonetheless, the centrality of culture in place branding is believed to be leading to the establishment of a culture industry, where cultural experiences are manufactured,

⁵Culture is defined within this work as “a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p.3).

commodified and marketed by specific social actors (Evans, 2003). This practice is viewed as an attempt by place marketers to blend local and global cultural experiences to form 'glocalized' place brands (ibid.). However, it also arguably linked to social tensions that potentially arise from the introduction of what may be regarded as inauthentic place attributes (Evans, 2003). The underlying argument is that, social tensions emerge from the imposition of a hegemonic culture as representative of the whole place and its inhabitants (Jones and Wilks-Heeg, 2004). A place can contain multiple cultures – similar to an organisation (cf. Ind, 1997) – which implies that the monopoly of one culture over others may result in conflict between brand interest groups, and a potential rejection of the place brand by the same stakeholders. Besides, culture projects tend to be targeted towards attracting tourists rather than benefit the local residents, yet local populaces want to live in places that they recognise as genuinely embracing a sense of who they are, and how they live their lives (Zavattaro, 2010).

Extending the analysis further, Abram et al. (1996) underlines that participation in the social construction of place meaning demands access to political, economic and socio-cultural resources by social groups. It also requires the capacity of the groups to communicate and promote their constructed meanings. Hence, the lack of resources and capacities bars some groups from involvement, implying that some meanings become visible or popular, while others are marginalised. Apart from heightening tensions between social groups, marginalisation also instils a sense of alienation in some of the inhabitants (e.g. Trueman et al., 2004). Moreover, there is an inclination for gaps to be created between the constructed place representations and the 'social reality' that they purport to embody (e.g. Jones and Wilks-Heeg,

2004). Trueman et al. (2004) conclude that the social actors who benefit most from a place brand's accomplishments tend to be ambiguous and controversial. Place branding agendas are often politically driven, implying that they primarily disproportionately generate value and benefits for the elites, or a small segment of the local populace, leading to even more social exclusion and inequality (Trueman et al. 2004).

More resemblance between a place and a corporate brand manifests in the degree of complexity and number of brand interest groups involved. Akin to a corporate brand, a place brand has a high level of complexity (cf. Ind, 1997), due to the potential participation of numerous parties in decision-making, presence of many operational departments, as well as large numbers of market offerings and individuals (cf. Balmer, 1995; Ind, 1997; de Chernatony 1999 and 2002; Hatch et al., 2000). The complexity of a place brand also results from a host of factors constituting the content of the brand. Such dimensions include climate, geographical location, natural resources, infrastructure, local residents and administrative institutions, history and conflicting stakeholder objectives (for a review see: Anholt, 2006; Caldwell and Freire, 2004; Fan, 2006; Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Trueman et al., 2004). Conceivably such complexity increases with the scale and scope of the brand as depicted graphically in Figure 1 below. Cities and towns are more likely to have less intricate and fragmented meanings as compared to vast national regions, nations or countries, and at the most complex level of abstraction, are supranational or continental regions.

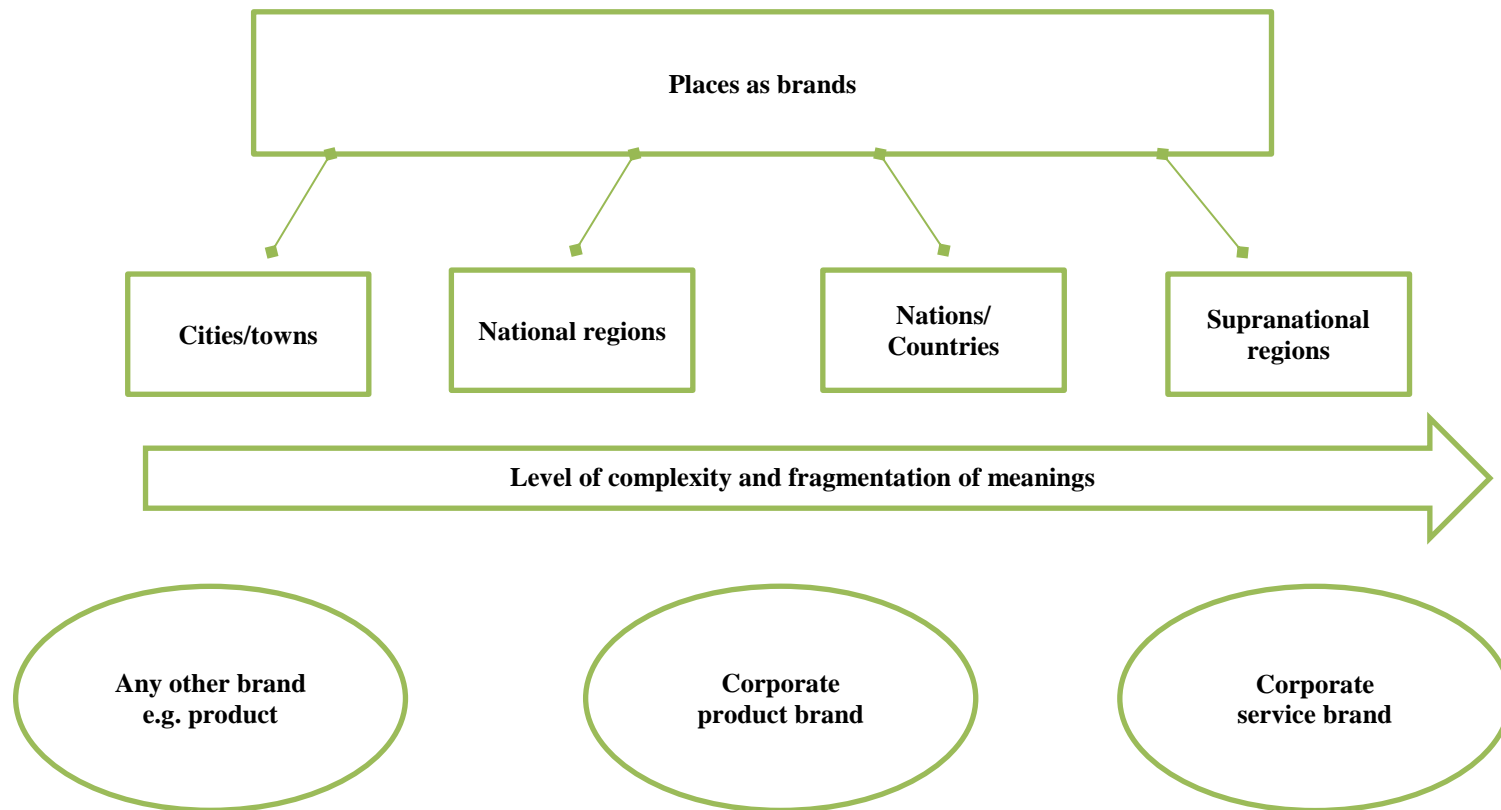


Figure 1: Complexity of place and corporate brands

Moreover, a place brand be it a city, country or supranational brand such as the EU, may mean different things to different individuals or stakeholders, in the same sense that a corporate brand is perceived. However, in some cases some interpretations may prevail as highly influential social cognitions, and therefore common phenomena among a group of individuals (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). The multifaceted nature of place brand moreover entails an element of intangibility – similar to a corporate brand –, which accrues from the integration of a variety of experiences of the place as compared to e.g. a more tangible form of brand such as a car or detergent that consumers can touch (cf. Ind, 1997). It is therefore equally difficult to control the stakeholder experience of the place brand, since ‘consumers’ individually assemble their own product out of the numerous elements of the place (Hankinson, 2003). As Kaplan et al. (2010) aptly summarise, akin to corporate brands, place brands are “*abstract in nature*” and typified by “*a greater degree of complexity*” given that they “*reflect a wide range of meanings*” (p.1289) for diverse stakeholders.

In dealing with the issue of complexity, Kavaratzis (2005) posits that the corporate brand covenant proposed by Balmer (2001), or the brand promise to stakeholders resembles a place vision that serves in connecting multiple stakeholders to the place brand (also see, Trueman et al., 2004). The development of a “*pioneering vision*” potentially leads to the unification of various stakeholders and winning their support for the brand (Trueman et al., 2004, p.323). Paradoxically, it is the presence of a network of public and private sector stakeholders (Hankinson, 2003) that presents a challenge, yet allows the management of the place brand to be a collaborative process rather than a purely management initiative. Thus this points to the centrality of facilitating place brand co-creation by diverse actors in order to ease, minimise or neutralise likely

branding challenges as argued by Aitken and Campelo (2011). McEachern (2006) supports this contention by stressing the need to foster a sense of brand ownership among all stakeholders. Indeed, the assimilation of several social groups' discourses potentially promotes a sense of ownership among all society's strata, while facilitating social cohesion around the place brand (Jones and Wilks-Heeg 2004).

Kavaratzis (2005) proceeds to reiterate that the functions of brands in satisfying different functional, symbolic and emotional needs (desires, goals and aspirations), equally apply to the case of place brands. This therefore demands the cultivation of place knowledge and information linked to the functions served by the brand, among stakeholders, so as to establish (favourable) place connotations and relationships with the brand (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). The knowledge of basic 'facts' such as on whether the place is man-made or natural influence individuals' feelings of the place in question, as observed by Tuan (1977). The process of managing a place brand hence becomes a systematic effort towards shaping stakeholders' knowledge structures or 'place schemata' (Kotler and Gertner, 2002) with the goal to build an attractive brand (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005).

Research on place branding is growing under a very broad assumption of similarities between corporations and places. However, corporate brands are not theoretically and technically similar in some aspects. Some corporations are more goods or service-oriented than others. For instance, while Apple's market offerings are mainly tangible, British Airways predominantly delivers services. Therefore, the core of corporate meaning varies between these corporations (and others) depending on whether the key source of consumer/stakeholder value is a tangible or an intangible offering (de

Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001). The degree of goods or service-orientation not only affects the main source of the organisation's meaning but also the process of branding a corporation (corporate branding) (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley, 1999). To illustrate, Apple invests immensely in product features (product innovation), while British Airways faces the challenge of developing its personnel into 'brand ambassadors' (cf. Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005). In different terms, for a goods-orientated organisation, the tangible offering is more central to the development of the corporate brand than it is for a service corporation, where organisational members are pivotal to how the brand is ultimately defined by stakeholders (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001) and other brand interest groups (see Figure 2 below). Indeed, employees of a service organisation are viewed as brand ambassadors whose behaviours convey the values embodied by the brand (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005). Yet the tendency to transfer the general underpinnings of corporate branding to places appears to overlook the distinctions between corporate goods and corporate service brands, and rather simplistic as a result. This leaves a knowledge gap on the potential extension of corporate branding to a complex entity such as Africa.

3.4. The idea of supranational place brands

In global markets 'meta'/'macro' regions may be as crucial as states, if not more significant. For instance *"the idea of Latin America may be more important than anyone of its regional components"* (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000, p.58) to to a given audience within a specific context. However, extant research on place branding is heavily concentrated in the areas of city, regions within nations, and nation branding (e.g. Caldwell and Freire, 2004). Only recently has a handful of studies started

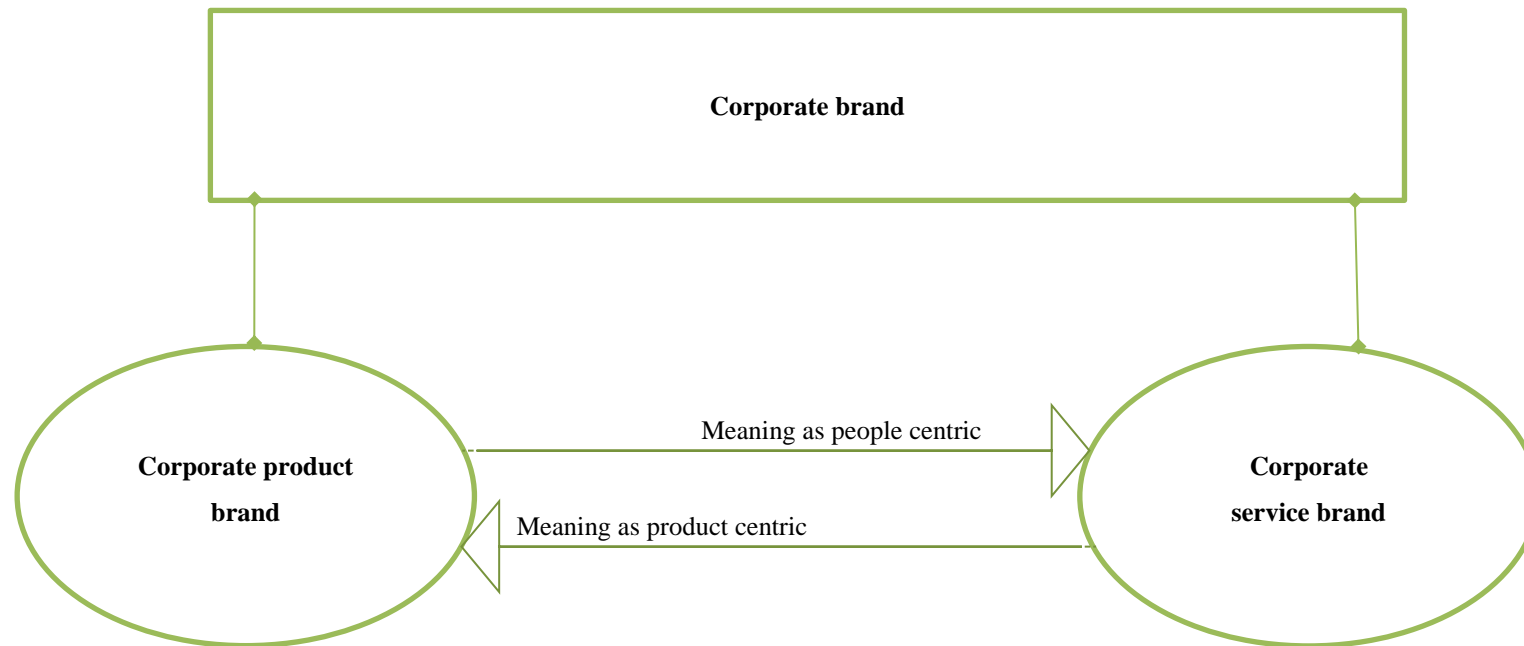


Figure 2: Core source of meaning – Corporate product brand versus corporate service brand

inquiring into supranational place brands (e.g. Andersson, 2007; Andersson and Paaanen, 2012; Therkelsen and Gram, 2010), classifying them as representative of ‘meta’ or ‘macro’ regions (Andersson, 2007). Such studies mainly focus on Europe or the European Union (EU), Baltic Sea Region (BSR), Scandinavia (Andersson and Paaanen, 2012) and the USA (Anholt and Hildreth, 2004 and 2010). A few scholars have also started addressing the issue of branding or rebranding Africa (e.g. Osei and Gbadamosi, 2011) – their analyses however tend to engage with the continent’s image, as reviewed further below. In one of the pioneering studies, Andersson (2007) investigates the potential of the BSR with its set of ten countries and diverse cultures, to build a competitive supranational place brand. Scrutinising the key factors for a competitive and coherent brand, the researcher identifies the lack of a central decision making-authority and unity of purpose among stakeholders within the BSR as the main obstacles. He underlines the need to establish a strong common identity, and an inclusive brand building process.

Andersson’s (2007) view as briefly outlined above is reinforced in another study by himself and a colleague, which concludes that “*supra-national branding benefits from a bottom-up approach that uses concrete products and services as the core of the brand identity*” (Andersson and Paaanen 2012, p.56). These researchers’ argument is an echo of Therkelsen and Gram (2010) critique of the notion of brand Europe, based on a website analysis of the European Travel Commission’s tourism initiative to market the continent as a unit (visiteurope dot com). Therkelsen and Gram (2010) highlight the impediments to creating an effective brand Europe as the failure to establish a unique collective identity for Europe, and the complexity of agreeing on brand values and a story that is reflective of the whole continent and its

experiences. These issues are compounded by the lack of an effective deployment of ‘common denominators’, and the prevalence of rivalry between national actors (Therkelsen and Gram, 2010).

Elsewhere, Aveline (2006) looks at brand Europe as institutionalised by the EU, whereby the EU flag, currency and the idea of the capital-city of Europe are symbolic manifestations of the brand. Brand Europe boasts of a very competitive identity that can be attached to any idea or offering for the global marketplace (van Ham, 2002). With its multiple “*Euro’-prefixed products, services, and events*” the EU brand resembles a master brand like Virgin and its diverse businesses (van Ham 2002, p.258). Moreover, the EU symbolises a notion of Europe linked to a set of concepts and ideas that include the enlightenment, Christendom and even the holocaust among others (ibid.). Hence it offers and generates a set of concrete experiences. However, Aveline (2006) describes the branding of Europe as a political manoeuvre for reconstituting citizens’ identities with the objective to generate transnational loyalty to the European Union. In her view, brand Europe is thus principally driven by the political goal to influence patriotism to Europe as a way to achieve global influence and relevance.

Aveline’s (2006) contention is equally reflected in Anholt and Hildreth (2004 and 2010) engaging assessment of brand America. The scholars contend that brand America has been (and is) constructed to lead the world politically, economically and socially (Anholt and Hildreth, 2004 and 2010). The brand “*radiates cultural superiority, political power and military dominance*” (van Ham, 2002), p. 262), which is a combination of characteristics not observable in any other supranational

place brands currently. It is controversial as it is both admired and detested across social groups, places and contexts (Anholt and Hildreth, 2004 and 2010). Metaphorically brand America is the ‘mother of all brands’, and home of the World’s leading brand icons such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi, MTV, Apple, Harley-Davidson, Nike and Marlboro among many more others (Anholt and Hildreth, 2004 and 2010).

These few pioneering studies on supranational place brands describe the establishment of such entities as strategic projects initiated and sponsored by regional administrators for various socio-economic gains. While these studies are insightful, they are mainly conceptual. They lack empirical evidence to support frameworks for understanding meta place brands and their potential value to distinct stakeholders. This point does not however serve to negate that the studies provide a good starting point for a broader and deeper exploration of macro regions such as continents. Considered alongside the growing body of research linking place and corporate brands (e.g. Ashworth, 2008; Kavaratzis, 2004, 2005 and 2009; Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005), the idea of supranational place brands further intensifies our inquisitiveness for understanding the utilisation of corporate branding within the sphere of meta regions.

3.5. Place branding and its link to development

The literature on place brands heavily focuses on place images and their implications for exports, tourism and foreign direct investment (e.g. Anholt, 2006 and 2010; Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Papadopoulos, 2004). The most prevalent line of argument holds place image as significantly influential upon how a country and its market

offerings compete and are perceived internationally (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000). It is asserted that a place image functions as the basis of differentiation for a country and its resources, products and services in international markets (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Researchers purport to investigate the impact of place brands on socio-economic progress by merely treating economic indicators (e.g. exports, tourism and foreign direct investment) as synonymous with development. However, such variables provide information on a place's economic growth, which itself is not development but a key component of the latter (Sen, 1999).

Similar to the construct brand, development is a multifarious concept that means different things to different individuals (Sumner and Tribe, 2008). Some scholars understand development as comprising of long-term structural and societal change, while others consider it to be *"a short-to-medium term outcome of desirable targets"*, and still others critique it as a *"dominant discourse of western modernity"* which imposes standards on other nations as indicators of development (Sumner and Tribe, 2008, p.11). However, Todaro (1977) proposes a broad and somehow clearer definition of development as:

"a multidimensional process often involving—in addition to basic improvements in incomes and outputs—radical changes in institutional, social, and administrative structures and, in some instances, in popular attitudes, customs, and beliefs" (Todaro, p.23).

Furthermore, development entails some form of transformation of the diverse forms

of human condition (Sumner and Tribe, 2008), and its goals transcend the maximisation of conventional outputs such as gross domestic and national products, to encompass the reduction of poverty, inequality and unemployment (Todaro, 1977). Development is represented by the substantive freedom(s) that people have to live the lives they value and such freedoms are broadly of political and economic nature (Sen, 1999). The same scholar maintains, in line with Todaro (1977) that development is indicated by the riddance of hunger, famine, abject poverty and social deprivation, as well as through the provision of economic opportunities and public infrastructure, facilitation of justice and democracy, and guaranteeing human (and women's) rights (Sen, 1999). His rather provocative stance is that a country may for instance have the highest gross domestic product globally, yet cannot be qualified as 'developed' if its citizens or segments thereof are deprived of some substantive freedoms. Deprivation or plight limits the capacity of human beings to choose the lives that promote their well-being, and desirable quality of life (Gasper and van Staveren, 2003). Understanding development should also include an assessment of whether people are satisfied with their 'freedoms' and realised outcomes (Sen, 1999). Moreover, the facilitation of development depends on institutions (Lewis, 1955) and interconnections among the institutions and community members in creating the social, political, and economic opportunities that allow people to live the lives they choose (Sen, 1999).

Although numerous studies refer to development as the core target of place branding, no published research yet appears to show direct correlations between the former and the notion of development either as captured by Todaro (1977) or any of the 'substantive freedoms' identified by Sen (1999). Engagement with place images and

economic variables arguably shies away from a more comprehensive analysis of these two core issues, and thus limits our understanding of their relationship from both theoretical and practical angles. However, the documented research is valuable in setting the foundation for further inquiry, as it sketches the links between place branding, and political as well as economic aspects in a number of ways that may have fundamental implications for the wellbeing and quality of life for individuals within a given place as discussed subsequently. The various goals of place branding fall within the brackets of leveraging political influence (Papadopoulos, 2004) or a nation's soft power base (Fan, 2008), creating favourable country of origin effects or product country image (e.g. Al-Sulaiti and Baker, 1998; Schooler, 1965) and nation building (e.g. Olins, 2003; Proudly South African, 2014). As means to development, these goals imply that place marketers and administrators globally rival for tourists (Anholt, 2006 and 2010) and *"trade, populations, wealth, prestige or power"* (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005, p.510). Utilising their images, countries thus *"compete on hard, quantifiable issues – inward investment, exports and tourism"* with the winners getting *"richer and stronger and the losers remain[ing] poor and weak"* (Olins, 2003, p.158).

The body of research on country of origin effects (CO) demonstrates that consumers transfer the characteristics of places to products, and therefore prefer products from specific countries or regions, and not others (Al-Sulaiti and Baker, 1998; Baker and Ballington 2002; Papadopoulos, 2004; Schooler, 1965). For instance, claims such as *"French wine is the best"* are circulated in international markets (Bruwer and Johnson, 2010, p.6; also see, Papadopoulos, 2004) and received as the 'reality'. Primarily, the *"qualities, images and in most cases, stereotypes of the place and the*

people living in it [are used] to brand a product that is produced in that place” (Kavaratzis, 2005, p.332). Although a place image may be constructed from (wrong) stereotypes and oversimplifications (Kotler and Gertner, 2002), the respective place brand is authoritative in determining the competitiveness of a country and its market offerings. Internationally, country names are brands in themselves which communicate the intrinsic features of products made in the country, and thereby help consumers to assess market offerings and make purchase decisions (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Cars made in Germany tend to be viewed as superior to other car brands, making the former more competitive in the global marketplace as compared to the latter. Outsiders have an inclination to perceive Germany as a country of precise and highly efficient engineers and technicians (Olins, 2002 and 2003), as the country is constantly promoted from that angle. Regardless of whether that perception is a stereotype or not *“brands like Mercedes can sweep across the world”* (Olins, 2003, p.17). In some cases however, the CO effects may be a burden to a good quality product, if the image of the place evokes less favourable associations in connection with the ‘made in’ label (van Ham, 2002).

Notably, corporate brands contribute to the associations attached to a country. In other words corporate brands are intertwined with their nation brands in a manner which allows either to brand the other. For instance to many stakeholders, Coca-cola and Microsoft represent America, in the same sense that Nokia symbolises Finland (van Ham, 2002). This symbiotic relationship between corporate brands and their home countries may have positive or negative implications for any of the two brands, based on how the brand is perceived and related to outside the home market. From a place branding perspective however, the urge among marketers is to

persistently highlight associations that pay off in terms of economic gains at least. Remarkably, the 'made in' concept is a key criterion not merely for competitiveness in international markets (Olins, 2003; O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000), but also for buffering domestic products and services against intensive global competition by linking home-made products to perceived local meanings (Papadopoulos, 2004). Evidently, marketers attempt to play on consumer understanding of, and trust for their region or country, signifying the importance of communicating and emphasising the distinctive features of the notion of 'home' in place branding to appeal to locals. As example, the country of South Africa has over the last decade invested in the "*Proudly South African "buy local"*" project which is specifically targeted at encouraging "*the nation to buy local products and make use of local services, in an effort to stimulate the local economy and help create jobs*" (Proudly South African, 2014). Consequently, a strong nation brand may provide its market offerings with positive associations (Kotler and Gertner, 2002) or reputational capital (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000), which affects the competitive advantage of the nation not only in the global marketplace but also locally (Papadopoulos, 2004). In turn this influences the progress of the respective country at least economically.

Place branding can also be utilised to improve international relations (Papadopoulos, 2004) and leverage the political relevance of a country (Fan, 2008). Lucrative country images benefit the nation in terms of boosting its soft power – defined as a country's capacity to influence other countries' behaviour or what they want, or change what they do without employing hard or coercive power (Nye, 2004 cited in Fan, 2008, p.147; Fan, 2010). For example, the United States of America (USA)

often employs the soft power generated by its cultural dominance (van Ham, 2002), to potentially influence its neighbours and other nations (Olins, 2003). Madonna and Brad Pitt among others, act as US culture ambassadors on-screen internationally in ways that appeal to individuals' hearts and minds (van Ham, 2002). By employing those cultural representatives, the USA 'softly' shapes processes and inputs that are crucial to its development. A place brand is thus of paramount significance to the nation's position globally (Olins, 2003).

In his analysis of Yugoslavia's endeavour to build a coherent national identity to facilitate investment, Hall (2002) observes that nations – regardless of whether their endeavours succeed or not – tend to draw on common heritage elements to reinforce a collective identity and attract foreign investors. By cautiously and selectively dissociating from historical civil conflicts and wars, countries seek to project an image of themselves as peaceful, stable and unified people (ibid.). Indeed, in a few cases, national authorities have embarked on place branding initiatives around nation building, with the goal to foster social cohesion and ultimately development. South Africa is one such case, of which place marketers articulate their role as:

“to create a positive, unified image of South Africa; one that builds pride, promotes investment and tourism, and helps new enterprises and job creation... Domestically, our aim is to build and sustain national pride and patriotism” (Brand South Africa, 2014).

In particular, the launching of the *“Proudly South African”* project cited above also serves to promote *“national pride, patriotism and social cohesion”* (Proudly South

African, 2014). Olins (2003) elaborates the same practice within the context of constituting a French identity following years of wars and political turbulences across the country.

However, the slowly growing interest in place brands and development is heavily biased towards economic gains as summarised by Papadopoulos (2004). The handful of currently available studies briefly alludes to the interrelationships between place brands and soft power, FDI, tourism as well as CO, without providing analyses of the link to ‘development’ in a more holistic sense that for instance covers social-cultural dimensions. Alone, economic development cannot be sustained without a more equitable socio-cultural improvement among the citizens of a place as asserted and demonstrated by several scholars (e.g. Elliot, 1994 and 2006; Soubbotina, 2004) and global institutions such as the United Nations’ World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). In the main, the contribution of place brands to sustainable development has not yet, apparently, captured some serious attention from marketing researchers so far. Putting the place brand at the centre stage of analysis can no longer be overlooked, especially now when countries in pursuit of sustainable development are conglomerating to compete for global market share and resources (or economic gain) as distinct regional blocks (e.g., the European Union).

3.6. The notion of sustainable development

The notion of sustainable development was globally introduced by the WCED in 1987. Representing the United Nations, the WCED published the report titled ‘Our Common Future’ and generally referred to as the Brundtland report, which appeals

to the international community to adopt the paradigm of sustainable development.⁶ Within the report, the WCED (1987) offers a definition of sustainable development as “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (p.54). This definition as well as the appeal to translate it into practice across the world, is based on the observed failure of the neoclassic model of economic growth (Elliott, 1994) to reduce inequality at intra- and international levels. The WCED (1987) argues that the pursuit of economic growth that has come to signify development is not only at the peril of the environment globally, but also leading to rising social inequality, unemployment, lack of democracy and the depletion of natural resources required by future generations and cultural identities (Soubotina, 2004). In other terms, the neoclassical model of economic growth has culminated in ‘development reversals’ (Elliot, 1994 and 2006) that impede both social progress and the sustainability of the environment (WCED, 1987). Thus the development trajectory followed so far is “*inevitably unsustainable*” (Soubotina, 2004, p.8).

Furthermore, complex “*planetwide interconnections*” (Hopwood, et al., 2005, p. 39) between socio-economic trends and the environment mean that developmental initiatives implemented in one part of the world entail repercussions for other places across the globe. This threatens ‘our common future’ as global citizens (WCED, 1987) and thus as a “*new paradigm of development*”, sustainable development (Lélé, 1991, p. 607) represents a solution that integrates the three key dimensions namely

⁶The report was named after the then Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland who chaired a WCED meeting addressing the complex interdependence between the environment, social and economic development, and which led to the production of the report (Elliot, 1994 and 2006).

economics, social equity and environment (Mebratu, 1998; WCED, 1987). The adoption and implementation of sustainable development policies, strategic approaches and project initiatives should be on the basis of new norms of behaviour by and on behalf of all people and places worldwide (WCED, 1987), in order to achieve a thriving, just and secure global future for all global citizens (Elliot, 1994). Primarily, the notion of sustainable development revolves around two central concepts:

“the concept of ‘needs’, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs” (WCED, 1987, p.54).

There are three points within this claim that are noteworthy. Firstly the imperative to eliminate poverty is central to the notion of sustainable development. Poverty has always been a threat to mankind especially in the least developed countries, where it manifests as famine, food insecurity, poor health and ultimately, comparatively shorter life spans. Poverty denies human beings the substantive human freedoms to lead the lives they value (Sen, 1999). Therefore the eradication of poverty is the main operational goal of sustainable development (Lélé, 1991). At the most basic level, poverty alleviation demands, and should ensure that the needs for jobs, food, energy, water and sanitation (i.e. the needs for human survival and welfare) are satisfied on a long-term basis (WCED, 1987).

Secondly, the goal to protect the environment represents one of the key priorities of the sustainable development agenda. This goal is intertwined with the objective to alleviate poverty, as reflected by the hypothesis shared by key global institutions, which identifies poverty as the root cause of environmental degradation (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1990 and 1994; WCED, 1987; World Bank, 1992). The key argument advanced by these institutions among other social actors is that, the poor are principally forced to resort to the environment for their livelihoods by the “*imperative of immediate survival*” (UNDP, 1994, p.7; also see UNDP, 2013a). Dependence upon the environment often leads to deforestation and resource depletion (UNDP 1994; WCED, 1987; World Bank, 1992). However, objections have been raised to the idea of regarding poor populations as “*agents*” and/or “*perpetrators*” of environmental destruction (Broad, 1994, p.811). Such an assumption is both too generalised (ibid.) and a weak assessment of the underlying reasons of environmental depletion (Lélé, 1991). It overlooks, whether by intention or not, the environmental effects of political and socio-cultural patterns such as over consumption that are manifest in industrialised nations (ibid.).

Thirdly, there is also a moral and ethical component entailed in the concern for the needs of ‘others’ current or in future, proximate or distant. This stance underpins a form of responsibility for and across generations, and thus discouraging transference of the costs of (our) present economic activities onto others, present or in future without appropriate compensation (Gladwin et al., 1995). However, the nature of the compensation that warrants sustained progress globally appears vague, and an area of debate among social actors. WCED (1987) claims that the “*critical objectives*” (p.59) for sustainable development not only entail the revival of economic growth in

order to eradicate absolute poverty, but also, the modification of the quality of such growth. This demands a less intense material and energy resource consumption through the use of more environmentally friendly technology and management of risk to mitigate environmental depletion globally by socio-economic actors (ibid.). Moreover, measures should be implemented at a global scale, which allows for a sustainable world population that matches the productive capacity of the environment (ibid.). Priority should also be given to the objective of conserving and enhancing the resource base so as to enable it to cater to the present and future needs. This requires, and relies on, the integration of both the environment and economics in decision-making, as these dimensions are interdependent within the “*workings of the real world*” (WCED 1987, p.71). Changing the quality of economic growth should also achieve more social equity globally (ibid.), particularly given the structural integration of developing countries in the global economy on unequal trade terms (Elliot, 1994 and 2006).

The notion of sustainable development as promoted by WCED (1987) has been attacked on both conceptual and operational levels. At a conceptual level, ‘sustainable development’ is loose (Hopwood et al., 2005), vague (Mebratu, 1998) and poorly articulated (Lélé, 1991). This weakness has consequently encouraged the generation of more than seventy alternative definitions so far (Elliot, 2006). Alone, this outcome reveals that ‘sustainable development’ is not only a contested (Connelly, 2007) but also an effectively confusing concept (Redclift, 2005 and 2008). Simultaneously, the various conceptualisations may also serve to highlight the significance of the concept to social actors, as noted elsewhere by Hillery (1955). Lélé (1991) attacks the fundamentals of the construct, yet the scholar also

appreciates that it is its conceptual vagueness and openness to competitive interpretations, which infuses it with both value and political vigour. It is also such conceptual flexibility that permits the idea of sustainable development to be embraced by global institutions, businesses, governments and non-governmental organisations as an organising principle locally (Mebratu, 1998).

The multiple meanings attached to sustainable development are not merely reflective of an enormous disagreement over what such a paradigm entails, but more critically, of how it should be realised (Connelly, 2007; Soubbotina, 2004; Redclift, 2005 and 2008). This is compounded by the observation that at an operational level, the Brundtland report fails to specify the concrete strategic approaches for translating ‘sustainable development’ into tangible actions and policies for the achievement of the set targets and priorities. The result of a lacking common action plan is witnessed in the many divergent, and possibly conflicting ways in which ‘sustainable development’ is pursued, and carried out. It is both complex and potentially futile to work with an idea globally without consensus on *“the process which almost everybody thinks is desirable”* (Redclift, 2008, p.279). This deficit also dictates that nations must debate choices, trade-offs and their costs for distinct social groups on their own (Elliot 1994 and 2006), leading to a divergence of priorities among social actors (nations) worldwide, and trade-offs in fulfilling local and global needs.

The criticism against the construct of sustainable development further engages with the issue of needs. In the main, scholars maintain that needs are dynamic; they change and/or are contextual. Thus it is improbable to know, define and predict the needs of future generations in particular (Redclift, 2005 and 2008). The non-static

nature of needs complicates their integration into current social, economic and environment-related decisions and initiatives (ibid.). Indeed, it is remarkable that the contextual nature of needs, for instance as reflected currently by the developmental gaps and stages between the developed and less developed nations, puts limitations upon any endeavour to design a fixed process plan (or a one size fits all solution) for translating sustainable development into actions or policies at a global level. Calling for a common blue print or strategic plan may therefore be myopic, as it appears to overlook the heterogeneity of needs across the globe. Different countries have different needs (Soubotina, 2004; WCED, 1987) – and so do different regions, with Africa being a case in point (African Development Bank [The], 2011). A single blueprint for nations or groups of social actors is not only likely to produce conflict alone, but also fail “*in maintaining development over time*” (Elliot, 2006, p.9). Hopkins (2009) aptly summarises that appreciating different contexts and the needs manifest herein, implies the accommodation of diverse pathways to sustainable development.

The debate also stretches into the area of the goals of sustainable development. Various scholars are convinced that the specified goals are practically incompatible with the technicalities of achieving development on a long-term basis (e.g. Elliott, 1994 and 2006; Connelly, 2007; Gladwin et al., 1995; Hopwood et al., 2005; Lélé, 1991; Meadowcroft, 2000; Redclift, 2005; Tisdell, 1988; Tiwari and Ibrahim, 2012). The underlying argument is that any form of development not only causes the pollution of environmental resources, but also and more importantly depends upon the exploitation of finite natural resources. Therefore, marrying resource consumption with environmental sustenance is not merely a challenge in itself, but

also, somewhat paradoxical given that extraction and pollution deplete instead of propagate the ecosystem (Elliott, 1994 and 2006; Connelly, 2007; Gladwin et al., 1995; Hopwood et al., 2005; Lélé, 1991; Meadowcroft, 2000; Redclift, 2005; Tisdell, 1988; Tiwari and Ibrahim, 2012). There also prevails a high level of confusion surrounding what has to be sustained universally (Redclift, 2008). For instance it is not clear if the targets of sustainability are the natural resources or the level of production and consumption (ibid.). This ambiguity entails a tendency among social actors to lack consensus over societal goals that qualify as sustainable development targets or which contribute to the realisation of the latter (Connelly, 2007).

Nonetheless, Connelly (2007) observes that the confusion partially arises from an apparently careless use of the construct as reference to just about everything. In some cases, sustainable is applied to mean ‘successful’ (Lélé, 1991). In other cases, the concept is used as a label for a broad scope of goals, ways and methods of moving towards what may be viewed by any distinct social actors as representative of ‘sustainable development’ (Hopwood, et al., 2005). However these features may seem problematic, yet they provide social actors with the leeway to initiate tailor-made ‘sustainable development’ projects based on their systems of values, judgement and evaluation of the relative significance of the economic, social and environmental factors on the ground (Soubotina, 2004). In essence what the WCED (1987) provides to the global community is a set of normative statements, which clearly appreciates the operationalisation of sustainable development as both complex and context dependent and contingent upon political will, collaborations between local and multilateral institutions, as well as inclusive participation.

Connelly (2007) thus concludes by asserting that ‘sustainable development’ performs various analytical and rhetorical roles, and encourages the scrutiny of how the construct is applied by policy-makers and other social actors contextually.

3.7. The place Africa⁷: Image and development

With over a billion people living in fifty-seven sovereign states, Africa is not only the second largest continent after Asia, but also the cradle of mankind. Despite its complex composition as observed in the geographical and socio-economic heterogeneousness across the continent, Africa *“forms not only a contiguous landmass but a coherent human community as well: one utterly distinct from all others—and utterly central to the human experience”* (Lewis and Wigen, 1997, p.xi). This view is supported and constantly fortified by multidisciplinary literature that identifies and categorises social phenomenon as African. Research puts forth classifications such as African culture (Ayisi, 1972; Browning, 1998), African politics (Allen, 1995), African heritage (Wilentz, 1992), African roots (Walker, 2001), African clothing and clothing style (DeBerry-Spence, 2008), African personality (Sofola, 1973), African law (Kuper and Kuper, 1965) and African legacy (Jones, 2003). A scan of mainstream discourses and academic sources thus confirms that Africa is seen as a homogenous entity. In some cases, layman viewpoints go as far as erroneously describing the continent as a country which speaks a common language called African.

⁷The historical overview was also presented in a case study developed at, and for the, Warwick Business School, within the Case Study Teaching Programme in 2012.

Africa became known to the Western World and beyond through the Roman and Ancient Greek voyagers and then the spice traders of the 8th century who circumnavigated the continent in accessing Asia. The explorers portrayed the continent as mythical and dark (e.g. Stanley 1899), initially due to lack of knowledge about its interior (Boahen, 1985; Chamberlain, 1999). At that period, neither chronicled history nor any other documentation on the continent was available to the voyagers (ibid.). However, the explorers ventured further into the continent gradually intensifying relations between Africa and Europe. By the 16th century, Africa had become a popular supplier of slaves and natural resources such as gold to the Western World (Boahen, 1985; Chamberlain, 1999). Three centuries later the continent was fully colonised by Europe (Boahen, 1985). The perception of Africa as dark gained currency and become more grounded in the European depictions, as the interaction between the explorers and Africans continued to increase. Chamberlain (1999) argues that the Victorian explorers' writings about the continent were the most influential in representing Africa as dark and devoid of culture, civilisation and history. In Boahen's (1985) judgment, Africans were never appreciated as "*creators of original cultures which flowered and survived over the centuries*" (p.xix). Along the same lines, Mazrui (1993) claims that the Europeans' refusal to attribute the African 'prehistorical' architectural structures to the indigenous peoples personified a collective rejection of the idea that Africans of the era were capable inventors and creators.

Moreover, the Victorians grew to appreciate Africa as paradoxically a continent that ceaselessly amazed through its fauna and flora (Boahen, 1985; Mazrui, 1993), and yet a helpless and primitive one that was typified by darkness, tribal wars, barbarism

and savageness (Chamberlain, 1999). Constant Victorian comparison of Africa with Britain in particular exposed what were considered to be socio-cultural malfunctions that needed to be redressed (Boahen, 1985; Chamberlain, 1999; Mazrui, 1993). The colonisers and explorers consequently adopted the stance that Africa could be transformed to the level of Europe's progress.

The objective to change and advance the continent to European standards ultimately resulted in the commitment of resources in form of aid and charity by European governments and donors (Chamberlain, 1999). This saw the commencement of the era of aid and charity for Africa, which has endured for centuries. Half of the continent's countries still rely on aid as the biggest source of funding for development (African Development Bank [The] et al., 2013b). Africa does not appear to have made much progress in changing the trend set as a result of the Victorian experiences; the continent is still regarded as feeble and donor-dependant (e.g. Anholt, 2006). These associations are constantly reproduced and reasserted by various commercial and individual activities. Corporations and social actors like celebrities, charities and other not-for-profit organisations across the World tap into the predominantly negative stereotypes attached to Africa in pursuing their business agendas (Anholt, 2006; Kuehn, 2009).

Kuehn (2009) criticises global corporations' exploitation of Africa's negative image based on deadly diseases such as AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, under the auspice of cause related marketing. Scrutinising the concept of 'Product RED', she argues that the linking of leading brands such as "*Gap, Motorola, Apple, Dell, and Armani*" (p.23) to Africa's perceived plight is reinforcing the negative branding of Africa.

The initiative which purports to be part of a corporate social responsibility agenda, lures consumers into buying and paying premium prices for products while reinforcing the image of Africa as a “*fragile, unstable and impoverished*” continent (p.30). In some cases, the associations symbolise authenticity and “*African land and spirit*” (p.30). Whichever way, the idea of Africa as reproduced by these corporations indiscriminately misrepresents the continent as “*culturally homogenous [and] under-developed*” (Kuehn, 2009, p.30).

Kuehn’s (2009) critique raises an interesting point shared elsewhere, and maintaining that Africa has always tended to be perceived as carrying a rather single unified image (Shen, 2009). For instance, Boisen et al. (2011) observe that “*every city on the continent of Africa, from well known to unknown*” is subject to the undermining effects of the stereotypes “*that a majority of the World’s inhabitants attribute to Africa*” (p.141). Mugobo and Ukpere (2011) substantiate that the representation of Africa in its entirety as a dark continent prone to “*civil wars, disease, poverty and famine... affects all African countries including those that are fairly stable such as South Africa, Botswana, and Egypt*” (p.8248). Further providing some research evidence, Boisen et al. (2011) note that according to Transparency International, Botswana is the least corrupt African country. Ranked 32 in 2011, it was at par with Portugal and outperforming some of the European Union member states like Poland (41) and Italy (69). Yet it is ascribed the same negative associations generalised across the whole of Africa (Boisen et al., 2011). By and large, a bad event that transpires and is registered in a single African country results in headlines globally which create the impression that the entire continent is plagued by disturbance, chaos and uncertainty (Field, 2012).

From their elaborate literature review, Osei and Gdabamosi (2011) further establish that the continent has managed to accumulate a variety of “*miscellaneous*” descriptions as a place to avoid, a risky continent and a wild jungle. Africa is also metaphorically perceived as the lost continent and the Whiteman’s grave (Jarosz, 1992). In Kuehn’s (2009) view however, the currently dominant image of Africa is a product of a colonialist discourse that controls representations about and of the Africans in ways meant to politically, economically and socially benefit the colonisers (cf. Said, 1978 and 1993). The underlying argument sees Africa’s monopolistic negative image as a Eurocentric conception, based on power imbalances between the West and Africa, which seeks to characterise the latter as an ‘insignificant’ ‘Other’ (cf. Said, 1978 and 1993). To illustrate, Jarosz (1992) returns to the notion of Africa as dark, attacking it for being a socially constructed characterisation and more than a signification of less developed cognitions about the continent among Western audiences. Instead the scholar claims that, it is a metaphor and a deliberate Western construction of Africans and the entire Africa as the inferior and less enlightened ‘Other’ (Jarosz, 1992).

The ‘Other’ is classified as distinct from the ‘Same’ group of individuals who view themselves as superior and thus more powerful (Said, 1978 and 1993). The process of ‘Othering’ serves to underscore the perceived ‘weaknesses’ of those believed to be inferior, and are to be marginalised as well as subordinated. Therefore, with its prominence in isolated yet converging discourses on Africa, the pre and post-colonial construction of the continent by Western “*explorers, missionaries, literary authors, journalists, and academics*”, lends the metaphor of Africa as dark with a

“tenacity [which] is testament to its emotional and dramatic power, its aesthetical appeal for Western audiences, and most importantly its crystallisation of Africa as Other” (Jarosz 1992, p.113). The continent’s image has become so entrenched in the global conception of the continent, effectively concealing its potential (Osei and Gbadamosi, 2011). This is persistently concretised by a complex of discursive process where good news about the continent is almost always buried (Field, 2012).

The debate on Africa’s image as reviewed above mostly revolves around attacking what is understood as a misconstrued Eurocentric picture of the continent and does not appear to provide alternative portrayals or solutions to that negative image. There is also a wide range of factors that arguably, cannot be overlooked when engaging with the subject of Africa’s image (or any other place image in general). An image, which is seldom accurate, is a reflection of something core to the place. This highlights the essence of looking into place features that may be linked to the perceived place image. For example, Africa remains the most underdeveloped continent in the World (United Nations Conference on Trade (UNCTAD), 2012; World Bank, 2012) with the highest levels of poverty, inequality (African Development Bank [The] et al., 2013b), and lowest life expectancy of approximately fifty-six years in 2011 (World Health Organization [The], 2014a). Indeed, poverty is a central issue across the continent and has been such for many centuries (Hopkins, 2009). Nearly half of the African population live in extreme poverty (World Bank [The], 2013a). Given this scenario, there has been a global drive to redress Africa’s ‘growth tragedy’ – to borrow Easterly and Levine’s (1995) terminology. Development agencies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and economists, as well as philanthropists (e.g. Mo Ibrahim, and Bill and Melinda

Gates) have provided funding, designed and recommended several developmental policy frameworks or ideologies. Yet so far, such initiatives do not appear to have yielded any substantial and sustainable progress for the continent. Project initiatives such as the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 2015 and Post MDG (United Nations, 2000 and 2013) exemplify some of the more tangible global institutional measures adopted as pathways to Africa's, and other less developed regions' sustainable development.

Agreed upon by World leaders at a UN Summit in September 2000, the MDG are eight broad developmental and time bound targets for Africa, Asia and Latin America, which speak to the issues that form the pillars of sustainable development (see table 2 below). The goals address developmental issues that are interlinked in one way or the other. For instance, poverty leads to food insecurity and this affects other issues such as health and access to education. Hence alleviating poverty has the potential to increase access to education and healthier life styles. Five years post the launch of the MDG, the United Nations declared that *"Africa...is the only continent not on track to meet any of the goals of the Millennium Declaration by 2015"* (cited in Easterly, 2009, p.26). This forecast has barely changed as revealed by a recent MDG progress report jointly published in late 2013 by the African Development Bank, United Nations' Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The same organisations conclude that Africa will not accomplish the targeted level of poverty reduction by 2015. Also, climate change and extreme weather conditions have damaged livelihoods thereby intensifying the continent's food insecurity (United Nations Development Programme [The], 2013b). *"Internally, natural disasters, both old (droughts), but also new (floods), are*

occurring with increasing frequency” (World Bank [The], 2013, p.20). Droughts are recurrent across Africa, and they exercise a very severe impact upon African communities and their environments (World Bank [The], 2013a). Their adverse effects are more striking particularly in regions where the majority of the population’s livelihoods are dependent on farming and breeding livestock (ibid.). Africa may be globally the second fastest growing region after Asia, however it is still underperforming in its efforts to meet crucial MDG (United Nations Development Programme [The], 2013b).

While MDG are applied as a benchmark for assessing and directing development, their fairness has been attacked, for instance on the grounds that they *“are poorly and arbitrarily designed to measure progress against poverty and deprivation, and that their design makes Africa look worse than it really is”* (Easterly, 2009, p.26). Whether the attacks are justified or not, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2012) reports that Africa’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the lowest of all continents – GDP is used for the analysis since it is regarded as one of the concrete, traditional and key indicators of development globally. At an estimated 4.8% growth in 2013 (African Development Bank [The] et al., 2013b), Africa’s GDP accounted for just about 2.4% of the World’s total GDP in 2010 (OECD, 2012). Globally, the continent receives the smallest share of FDI, which totalled about 5.3% of the World’s sum in 2010 (OECD, 2012), thereby indicating Africa’s struggle to attract international investment as claimed elsewhere by Abimbola (2006).

Table 2: Millennium Development Goals 2015

Goal	Africa's Performance
1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Not sufficient to reach target; Approximately 124million people living on less than \$1.25 a day in 2010
2: Achieve universal primary education	Achieved universal primary school enrolment of 90%; However, 1/3 drop out, with girls more likely to drop out than boys; High grade repetitions; and “30% of students with six years of schooling cannot read a sentence” (UNDP, 2013, p.7)
3: Promote gender equality and empower women	More than half of African countries have attained gender parity; there are more women in parliaments than in e.g. Europe. However inequality in economic opportunities and household power, with women being disadvantaged
4: Reduce child mortality	Underperforming: The rate of mortality of children under five years declined from 47% to 45% between 1990 and 2011
5: Improve maternal health	Underperforming: Maternal mortality was 42% between 1990 and 2010. However pregnant women die from diseases that can be prevented
6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	On track: The spread of HIV, Malaria and Tuberculosis has been halted. However these two remain a high risk factor
7: Ensure environmental sustainability	Mixed progress: Marginal damaging impact upon the environment through CO2 emissions and ozone depletion. However deforestation and water sanitation remain major issues particularly in rural areas
8: Develop a global partnership for development	Prospects are “dim” as official development to Africa (ODA) is predicted to decline through to 2015, due to the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis (UNDP, 2013, p.8)

Source: UNDP (2013)

Equally small, is the continent's share of global trade, with exports at about 3% and imports slightly more than export share at 3.3% in 2010 (OECD, 2012). In general, African brands are hardly available on Western markets, with the exception of South African wine in isolated cases (Sigué, 2012). Primarily, African countries rely on a maximum of commodity exports (World Bank [The], 2013a) namely: Agro products,

with Ivory Coast being the largest supplier of coffee beans, before Ghana (Sigué, 2012); Oil, with Libya and Nigeria being some of the key suppliers (World Bank [The], 2013a) and; Minerals such as tantalum used in the development of electronic devices such as computers, mobile phones and play stations among others as documented by the Cable News Network (CNN) (2013). Indeed, of the world's mineral reserves, Africa holds approximately 40% gold, 60% cobalt, 65% diamonds and 72% chromium (African Development Bank [The], 2011). Despite these endowments, the resources are not utilised to alleviate poverty across the continent. Under utilisation of, and investment into industrial sectors key to the processing of the mineral reserves also means that African economies remain primarily agriculture-driven (OECD, 2012). Over 65% of the African labour force is employed or works within the agrarian sector (African Development Bank [The], 2011). As predominantly commodities, Africa's exports are vulnerable to fluctuating demand and price shocks (World Bank [The], 2013a). They also face competition from other suppliers of particularly oil from the Gulf region, which makes the continent's growth based on exports rather temporary.

Hence the continent lacks a sustainable exports base. Interestingly, Sigué (2012) argues that African countries have so far not managed to leverage their most valuable commodities. There is however an opportunity for Africa to build a strong export profile from a marketing perspective (ibid.). For instance, tantalum is one of Africa's minerals "*that make the World go round*" (CNN, 2013). It is used not only for medical implants and bone repair, but also in the production of parts of "*cell phones, laptops and other small electronic devises*" (CNN, 2013). However, consumers do not seem to have an awareness or appreciation of the mineral's origin.

Arguably, this shows a missed opportunity for Africa to position its products more competitively on international markets. As Sigué (2012, p.3) maintains, *“solid brands could be developed for some African commodities”* used by iconic brands such as Apple and Sony.

Collier (2008) argues that the development of Africa is a hard objective to achieve but not an impossible one. The major challenge lies in the identification of the continent's lack of sustainable growth and progress, as well as designing and implementing solutions to tackle the obstacles. The perceived reasons for the continent's poverty and underdevelopment are multifaceted as well as contested. They range from the effects of Western colonisation/settlement and slave trade, which are believed to have robbed the continent of its essential resources, to population explosion which cannot be sustained by the available resources and outputs, and ethnic tensions as well as weak institutions that either undermine or disrupt progress and development efforts (for a review, see, Hopkins 2009). Kotler et al. (1997) conclude that:

“Many African nations are mired in problems ranging from corruption, food shortages, low literacy and productivity, to AIDS and other diseases and ethnic conflicts” (p.6).

Combined, the numerous problems are detrimental to the continent's growth prospects, and place marketers and researchers have started to emphasise these issues in connection with Africa's negative image as the explanation for poverty (e.g. Anholt, 2010; Osei and Gbadamosi, 2011). The observers' underlying argument

echoes the logic discussed in the preceding section of this work, which privileges the role of place brand in promoting FDI inflows, exports and access to other developmental factors. It is thus concluded by researchers that Africa needs investment from outside (Anholt, 2010), yet its notorious image results in international investors' shunning the continent (Osei and Gbadamosi, 2011).

Currently, the continent is viewed as undergoing a turnaround – that is, being on track to progress – by leading industry voices such as the Economist (2011 and 2013) and the New York Times (2012). These institutions and various other social actors believe that Africa is rising (Mahajan, 2011). To some foreign investors, the word “*Africa*” now means economic opportunity, as exemplified by a potentially strong demand for the continent's commodities and mineral resources and movements of multinational companies into the continent (Field, 2012, p.22). This is in most part due to the continent's emerging “*role as a growth pole in an ailing global economy*” typified by stagnating markets in the West (African Development Bank [The] et al., 2013b). The perception of Africa as a potential destination for international investment indeed locates the continent at crossroads between poverty reduction and image rejuvenation. There are some notable small gains in terms of GDP and FDI inflows among African countries such as Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Zambia and Mozambique (Economist [The], 2011). Yet development agencies (e.g. UNDP, 2013) have raised a crucial question of whether such developmental gains can be spread and sustained across the continent. At the same time, various researchers and practitioners have underscored the link between place brands and development factors such as FDI, tourism and international political influence.

Combined, these observations draw attention to the potential role of *brand Africa* in facilitating sustainable development across the continent.

However, the (speculative) claims that the notorious image is the biggest impediment to Africa's development (Anholt, 2010) and that its economic prospects lie in the rejuvenation of that image (Mugobo and Ukpere 2011) imply that there is a preoccupation with transforming the symptoms not the root causes of the problem. For instance, Osei and Gbadamosi (2011) suggest a handful of what they view as strategies for boosting the continent's image. While scholars may claim that brand value revolves around building an attractive image (Aaker, 1996), the latter is merely one facet of the former. Conceptually, *brand Africa's* image cannot be equated to the 'actual' brand itself. The image mirrors certain dimensions of the entity in question, namely *brand Africa*. Therefore, regarding the image of the entity as the entity itself represents an inadequate conceptualisation of *brand Africa*, or any other brand.

3.8. Knowledge gap identified in the literature

To reiterate, the preceding discussion has highlighted two key issues: Firstly the general utilisation of corporate branding to explain the creation of place brands, and; secondly, the absence of a clear definition of *brand Africa*. When linking corporate branding to places, current studies do not appear to address the variation between corporate goods and corporate service brands and their implications for place branding. The evolution of corporate brands is not a standard process given that the core source of meaning and brand value differs between the two entities based on the degree of product or service orientation (as pointed out further above). We argue that the lack of theoretical delineation between a corporate goods and corporate service

brand in relation to place branding creates a knowledge gap, particularly when seeking to understand a complex supranational entity such as *brand Africa*. It is not clear whether *brand Africa* derives from the tangible aspects of the place (similar to the case of a corporate goods brand), or the intangible dimensions (as in the case of a corporate service brand) or even a combination of both. Therefore, the underlying research question is formulated as ‘to what extent can the corporate branding paradigm be applied to a continent?’

Moreover, drawing on our knowledge of brands and their significance to diverse brand interest groups (as reviewed in Chapter 2), we proclaim that efforts to identify the association between a corporate and a supranational place *brand* such as *Africa* may deliver a partial analysis, unless coupled with an investigation of the latter’s socio-economic significance. To emphasise, ‘brands’ are only brands if they serve specific socio-economic purposes, and therefore generate value for distinct brand interest groups or individuals. The lack of a scientific definition of *brand Africa* is however paired with some ambiguity on the role of the brand particularly in sustainable development. We maintain that the theoretical connection to sustainable is crucial to our analysis not only for the reason that Africa is an impoverished continent, but also in view of the key role of place brands in general.

Our literature review above has accentuated that the value of place brands is linked to promoting (sustainable) development through various approaches (e.g. leveraging soft power). We therefore add a layer to our main research question by inquiring: ‘How does *brand Africa* facilitate sustainable development?’ Addressing our underlying research question in this manner is deemed relevant in the sense that it

facilitates the identification and documentation of specific corporate brand features likely to permit the conceptualisation and management of (supranational) place brands and their value generation process.

3.9. Chapter summary

This chapter set off to locate the conceptual and technical links between corporate and place branding. Herein, it has been argued that the theoretical and practical evolution of a place brand is based on observable similarities between places and corporations. Akin to corporations, places are potentially marketable entities with images, identities and multiple stakeholders that can all be managed from a marketing perspective. Theories and praxis on place brands are therefore founded upon the corporate branding tenet. One of the main contentions advanced within the chapter pertains to the centrality of place identity to place branding in the same way that corporate identity functions as the source of both meaning and value for a corporate brand. The chapter has therefore underlined the point that place branding revolves around identity development, analogous with corporate branding. It has also been noted that identity is not given, but co-created by various stakeholders.

With the relevance of place identity underlined, the review has then proceeded to inquire into the social construction of place meaning. Examples on the social construction of ‘Europe’, ‘Europeaness’ and ‘European values’ have been drawn upon to demonstrate the interlinkage between the main concepts of identity and meaning, as well as their concretisation. The chapter has also addressed the roles played by governments and media in establishing ‘desirable’ and often controversial place identities/images by exploiting the culture of a given place. However, the

chapter has also pointed out that the evolution of corporate brands varies based on whether the entity in question is a corporate goods or corporate service brand. The difference between these two brands' core source of meaning and value does not appear to be explicitly taken into account by current studies on place branding. This leads to lack of transparency on the form of a corporate brand that better explains a supranational entity like Africa, or if the latter derives from both versions.

This chapter has also reviewed the diverse purposes of place branding. It has been observed that place brands are created to facilitate development utilising different approaches such as promoting positive country of origin effects and nation building among others. The concept of development has been critiqued as mainly referring to economic growth and often lacking sustainability. This has led the chapter to evaluate the notion of sustainable development, prior to an analysis of Africa's image and perceived current state of development. In discussing Africa, the chapter has underlined that the continent remains the least developed place in the world, despite individual and collaborative efforts to foster socio-economic growth so far. Scholarly thought on the image of the continent, and tendency to loosely equate the place's image to *brand Africa* have been critiqued. The argument has been made that the lack of conceptual clarity on what *brand Africa* 'represents', is intertwined with some confusion on the role of the brand in promoting sustainable development. In an effort to address the issues stated above and move this work closer to its research objectives, the next chapter will present the research methodology.

4. METHODOLOGY

“Most people who have not yet used these new media remain unaware of how profoundly the social, political, and scientific experiments under way today via computer networks could change all our lives in the near future” (Rheingold, 1993 p.4)

4.1. Introduction

This chapter gives an account of the research methodology employed in an attempt to answer the principal research question on the extent to which the corporate branding paradigm is applicable to a continent. A case analysis of *brand Africa* was conducted focusing on two specific questions, which were extrapolated from the conception of brands as meanings attached to entities, and sources of socio-economic value. Firstly, the investigation sought to answer the question: ‘what does Africa mean to a collective such as the African diaspora?’ With the establishment of Africa’s meaning progressing into conceptualising *brand Africa*, the second question was then formulated as ‘how does *brand Africa* facilitate the continent’s sustainable development – what are the critical brand factors within that context? Given the geographical dispersion of the African diaspora, the method of netnography (Kozinets, 2002 and 2010) – alternatively classified as ethnography on the Internet (Hine, 2000; Grbich, 2007) was adopted by this study. A sample of the African diasporan online was purposefully chosen for analysis in view of the group’s historical and current contribution to the continent’s progress. This chapter proceeds by assessing the justification for investigating the African diaspora and conducting a netnographic inquiry within the context of *brand Africa* and sustainable development.

4.2. Sample and its justification: The African diaspora

It has also been argued in chapter two that brands are socially constructed and an entity that is exposed to the market in one way or the other may hold multiple meanings for different brand interest groups. Therefore, the identification of key brand interest groups is instrumental to an exploration of competitive factors that permit a brand to generate value for its stakeholders. Among the potential *brand Africa's* interest groups (e.g. non-governmental organisations, tourists and investors) the African diaspora is a massive group whose members also fall into the examples stated above. The African diaspora⁸ can be defined along the African Union's (AU) conception as "*peoples of African descent and heritage living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship*" (African Union, 2005, p.6). There are over 168 million people of African descent located around the world – North America (39.16

⁸The term diaspora is loaded with conceptual tensions (for a review, see Mohan and Zack-Williams, 2002). However, Cohen (2008) observes that most of the definitions are rooted in Safran (1991). The latter scholar notes that diaspora can be defined along Walker Connor's "broad working definition [as] "that segment of a people living outside the homeland"" (Connor 1988, cited in Safran, 1991, p.83). Members of a diaspora are characterised by a number of the following: "1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral home-land as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship" (Safran, 1991, p.83-84).

million), Latin America (112.65 million), the Caribbean (13.56 million) and Europe (3.51 million) (African Diaspora Program [World Bank], 2013). Although the African Union regards its diaspora as the sixth region and therefore an integral part of the continent – with the other regions being north, south, east, west and central parts of Africa –, Adi (2002) observes that the group is far from homogenous. There are descendants of slaves who were forced into diaspora, recent African economic and political refugees and others who are based in Central America and the Caribbean (Mohan and Zack-Williams, 2002; Palmer, 2000).

To some of the diaspora, Africa represents home and a place from which their identities derive, but to others, Africa may not hold much meaning. Their ties to Africa may be strong or loose, yet as Anderson (1991) claims, it is the imagined sense of belonging to a group and place which connects them to the continent in ways deemed interesting to this study. In particular, the perception of a social identity that an individual believes (s)he shares with a distinct group of others (Mohan and Zack-Williams, 2002) provides an arguably solid reason for an academic engagement with the African diaspora. Moreover, the African diaspora has historically taken the lead in shaping the continent's development trajectory in some fundamental ways (Mohan and Zack-Williams, 2002). Offering an example, Adi (2002) states that the diaspora was crucial in attaining political independence across the continent:

“The ideologies of anti-colonialism were often initially developed in London, Paris and within the political networks of the diaspora... the politics of the diaspora can be seen as an integral part of modern Africa

politics, a contributory factor that is impossible to ignore...” (Adi, 2002, p.239).

The diasporan priorities may now be changing given that African states are now sovereign (independent). At the same time, it has also gradually become more evident that the post-colonial economic and to a certain extent, political gains have been diminished throughout the continent. Reversing the losses and ensuring Africa’s sustainable progress is an imperative goal that, according to the AU, also requires input from the continent’s diaspora. With its knowledge and financial resources, the African diasporan is an agent of development, whose active participation can contribute to the transformation of the continent across generations (Ankomah et al., 2012). Indeed, the contribution of the diaspora to Africa’s economic progress is captured by the volume of remittances sent back to the continent. The African Development Bank (2013) reports that the amount of diasporan remittances quadrupled since 1990 to reach an approximated total of US \$40 billion in 2010, or about three per cent of the continent’s total GDP.

There are a few good cases where the role of the African diaspora in homeland development has been very tangible. For instance, Kleist (2008) looks at the Danish Somali diaspora’s input towards the reconstruction of the once war torn country. The scholar notes that the community is made up of well-educated and eloquent Somalis, who are medical doctors, managers, engineers and offspring of former government officials, army generals and traditional clan leaders (Kleist, 2008). They collaborate with the goal to establish trust among Somalis as a means for reconciliation and fostering the country’s development (ibid.). This intelligentsia is not unique to

Somalian diaspora alone. In general the African diaspora particularly living in Western countries has been observed to be a variegated and highly literate segment of immigrants (African Diaspora Program [World Bank], 2013) with an interest in continuously nurturing their bond with Africa. Ankomah et al. (2012) illustrates this claim more concretely citing Ghana as a country that has become a *de facto* home for some of the African diaspora with a slavery ancestry. Ghana owes its popularity in part due to its historical significance in slave-trade, and association with key political figures such as Kwame Nkrumah, an advocate for a unified Africa (Pan Africanism) (Ankomah et al., 2012). Outlining the ‘Ghanaian’ diaspora’s initiatives, the researchers observe that there “*are businesses, associations, and individuals*” who are making significant human, financial and social capital contributions to Ghana’s economy (Ankomah et al., 2012, p.392). They further comment however, that Africa’s negative image may be a barrier to a sustainable and broader diasporan engagement with the continent’s progress (ibid.). Therefore the significance of exploring the diaspora’s notions pertaining to *brand Africa* and sustainable development cannot be understated. Such an analysis can reveal crucial factors that should be leveraged as a measure towards boosting the continent’s continuous progress.

4.3. Rationale: Netnography

As a product of interaction among members of a social group (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), the meaning ascribed to an entity should be explored within the ‘natural’ setting where the interactive processes occur. Expressed in somewhat different terms, studying meanings should adopt techniques that integrate the contexts within which the meanings are produced (Hammersley, 1990). Our research

thus applies netnography (Kozinets, 2002 and 2010) with the aim “*to reveal the structure of meanings*” attached to Africa, and “*as constructed by [diasporan] individuals engaged in a social process*” of discussing the continent (cf. Hackley, 1998, p.6). The value of netnography as a qualitative research methodology lies in these scientific procedures that make up the technique: definition of the research question for investigation, identification and selection of the community to be studied (entrée), participant observation, data analysis, reporting on the study and its implications, as well as observation of ethical research standards (Kozinets, 2002 and 2010). While netnography is originally conceived as a methodology for investigating marketing related issues, it is not limited to a single discipline and this testifies to the practice’s value to social scientists. This is exemplified by the volume of studies published in diverse competitive journals during the last ten years, which include Brown et al. (2003), Healy and McDonagh (2013) Kozinets (2002 and 2010), Kulavuz-Onal and Vásquez (2013), Langer and Beckman (2005), Mclelland (2002), Mkono (2012), Nelson and Otnes (2005), Rokka and Moisander (2009), Sandlin (2007), Schau et al. (2009), Seraj (2012), as well as Xun and Reynolds (2010). Netnography is thus not only instrumental to this research, but also to numerous other social scientists interested in gaining a deeper understanding of social phenomena that would have been unfeasible to investigate due to space, time and financial constraints among other research affiliated challenges.

Our decision to conduct a netnographic study is moreover based on the goal to access insights on a global scale, given the presence of the African diaspora all over the world. The geographic dispersion of the African diaspora hinders any reasonable and productive physical interaction between the community and the researcher on a

global scale. At the same time, an increasingly affordable Internet access worldwide, and the en mass congregation of the African diaspora in online communities dissolves the communication boundaries that would otherwise cripple such analysis. Furthermore, netnography is a less costly and time-consuming methodology (Kozinets, 2002 and 2010), as the researcher can collect data within his/her residence or office premises (Hine, 2000; Markham, 2005).

Another key strength of netnography relates to the specificity and clarity of the relevant steps that allow the investigator to address his/her research objectives. On one pole the application of ethnographic procedures to online environments has been in practice for over a decade (e.g. Hine, 2000 and 2007; Leander and McKim, 2003; Markham, 2005; McLelland, 2002; Sade-Beck, 2004). On the other pole, there has not been a clear set of instructions for conducting the analysis (Kozinets, 2002 and 2010). In contrast, netnography represents a clear, and the first published ‘blueprint’ for studying brand related meanings that are generated in online communities, and which influence the physical and social worlds of brand interest groups offline (e.g. Brown et al., 2003; Fueller et al., 2008; Luedicke, 2006; Schau and Muñiz, 2002; Schau et al., 2009).

Researchers describe netnography as “*a brand new, old-fashioned research technique*” (Brown et al., 2003, p.23), arguably in an effort to emphasise the methodology’s capacity to combine approved and traditional ethnographic procedures with measures that are sensitive to virtually based interaction among social groups. Similar to offline ethnography, netnography opens the door to the experiences of the African diaspora as they relate to their continent of origin. By

allowing the researcher to conduct the study within the ‘natural setting’ of the research participants (cf. Belk et al., 1988; Hammersley, 1990), netnography qualifies as a naturalistic inquiry (Kozinets, 2002 and 2010). It essentially gives primacy to naturally occurring behaviours and speeches (Ibid.), which is fundamental to a fuller understanding and documentation of how the diaspora’s collective “*beliefs, values and custom*” may “*order, guide and direct*” the group’s interpretations and behaviours linked to Africa and its sustainable development (cf. Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994, p.485). However, an objection has been raised against the idea of positioning netnography as a ‘naturalistic’ inquiry. The mediation of communication by technology appears to cast doubts on the ‘naturalistic form’ of the study, and/or credibility of the data collected (e.g. Domínguez et al., 2007; Hine, 2000; Markham, 2005; Paccagnella, 1997). Yet the idea of ‘naturalistic’ refers to the space in which the members interact (Belk et al., 1988) as opposed to an artificial context or laboratory where informants are gathered to provide insights on a phenomenon by questioning them on what they believe, and assume will do, or have done (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994).

Within this study, each online community of the African diaspora is considered ‘natural’ as it is the normal context in which individuals from all over the world congregate daily, and engage in sharing their thoughts, views and experiences linked to the continent. As recommended by both traditional ethnographers (e.g. Belk et al., 1988; Hammersley, 1990; Kozinets, 2002 and 2010), the online communities are also in existence before the researcher enters the site. Therefore, they are independent of the researcher and the research project, which is a crucial factor as it promotes the production of naturally occurring behaviours and speeches (cf.

Kozinets, 2002 and 2010). Above and beyond, the pre-existence of the setting also allows the researcher to compare materials produced before and during his/her presence, identify and establish any inconsistencies and account for the latter. This feature is helpful to the analysis particularly in view of another line of attack that draws attention to possible (short-term) enactment of fake behaviours by community members as further elaborated below.

Another feature that permits netnography to be useful to this study pertains to participant observation. A netnographic inquiry allows the investigator to immerse into the social-cultural environment and more holistically analyse the interactive performances in situ, in a less obtrusive manner (Kozinets, 2002 and 2010). The immersion of the researcher into the community allows community members to continue their enactment of virtual discourses in what may be described as an authentic manner, particularly in the long term. However, there are few points of criticism that have been raised in connection with the above technical steps. One of the concerns is that full integration in an online community may lead to the researcher personally sympathising with the informants and potentially losing research focus, leading to biased interpretations (Grbich, 2007; Hammersley, 1990; Hine, 2000 and 2007; Markham, 2005). While immersion may allow the researcher to gain an insider perspective of the community's interaction, it may also blur the boundaries between the researcher's two roles as "*fieldworker and theorist*" (Hine, 2000, p.44), resulting in the researcher going native (Grbich, 2007; Hammersley, 1990). This may have a negative impact on the quality and quantity of data collected, as well as its interpretation and presentation. However, constant introspection and questioning the researcher's assumptions (reflexive engagement with the analysis),

have been identified as some of the ways through which the risk of going native can be neutralised (Hine, 2000; Kozinets, 2010).

The second issue relates to the realisation of a 'holistic' interaction (Hine, 2000; Markham, 2005). Contrary to physical environments, the deprivation of social cues from online contexts may seem to impede fuller social interaction typical of physical environments. It is consequently argued that complex details relevant to a holistic description and understanding of an experience are lost in online environments (Kozinets 2002 and 2010). Therefore, the ability of individuals to articulate their brand related emotions might be constrained. Conversely, it has been observed that online community members are inventive, they create semiotic devices such as photos, avatars and emoticons and even jargon, which compensate for the lack of full sensory interaction (Schau and Muñiz, 2002; Nelson and Otnes, 2005; Markham, 2005). Supported by these observations, a netnographer who seeks to elicit and document shared meanings has the task of determining why a certain visual depiction, speech utterance or performance is enacted in a particular context and not in others, as well as who enacts it and how (Kozinets, 2010; Markham, 2005).

The third perceived problem is the assumption that individuals may consciously alter their behaviours when under observation (Becker, 1958; Watts, 2010). Yet it is also claimed that preoccupation with matters that are central to individuals' lives and collective interaction will persuade members to resume their normal behavioural patterns within the community (Becker, 1958). Thus any likely 'fakery' will gradually fade as it becomes increasingly challenging for individuals to sustain on a long-term basis. Moreover as Atkinson and Hammersley (1994, p.256) note

elsewhere, participant observation is based on the “*principle of interaction and the ‘reciprocity of perspectives’ between social actors*”. The rhetoric is thus egalitarian in the sense that the observer and observed become inhabitants of a shared social environment. Thus such collaborative and co-operative nature of the study may eliminate potential challenges (ibid.).

A connected line of criticism revolves around the idea of virtual contexts as ‘disembodied’ spaces (Markham, 2005) where the physical being is not accessible to the ‘other’ during interaction, leading to the prevalence of increased anonymity (cf. Schutz, 1967 and 1970). This may increase the risk of identity falsification (Hine, 2000; Markham, 2005) as the researcher has limited capacity, if any at all, in confirming whether the informants are indeed who they claim to be (Hine, 2000; Kozinets, 2002 and 2010; Markham, 2005). A counter point within this context sees deeper engagement with the identities of the individuals per se as not being the vital element of the investigation, but rather, the virtual discourses that are produced by those identities and published on a space where any individual can access as well as act upon them. Notably, it is relevant and arguably sufficient to the purpose of this study, for individuals to identify themselves as African diaspora, and choose to join the respective social group within which they express their views – As the core of this study does not seek to hold an understanding of the concept African diaspora itself. Moreover, “*prolonged participation of the researcher in the group*” (cf. Watts, 2011, p.302), neutralises some of the challenges that may result from ‘fake identities’.

At the same time, researchers note that anonymity provides individuals with the

freedom to express themselves, their dreams, hopes and internal conflicts more openly (Kozinets, 2002 and 2010), while supplying researchers with information that would otherwise be concealed (Langer and Beckman, 2005). Originally marginalised voices are expressed, and issues that may have been considered taboo, but are crucial to both private citizens and researchers are openly turned into debatable premises, as individuals feel more secure online. Furthermore, the alteration of identities online may not be unique to online communities alone (Taylor, 1999; Carter, 2005) given that individuals are inclined to modify their identities in physical environments as well, in order to adapt to temporal social contexts (Whitty, 2004). Besides, triangulation and member checks through interviews for instance, are both instrumental in increasing the authenticity and trustworthiness (Denzin, 2006) of the data accumulated from online communities. To put it another way, triangulation provides an opportunity to eliminate or reduce increased anonymity, as became transparent within our analysis.

Given that netnography adapts ethnographic techniques, its likelihood of inheriting the perceived weak elements of the latter methodology is an issue that has been highlighted in the past (Kozinets, 2010). The controversy sparks mainly from a presumably subjective judgement of the researcher in selecting the data to be analysed once a community has been accessed, and its scientific representation as arguably representing social reality (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Grbich, 2007; Hammersley, 1990). This line of criticism is motivated by the tendency to compare ethnographic methods with positivistic approaches (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994), yet the assessment of what counts as data is not only subjective across all disciplines (Schutz, 1953) but also based on personal or social values that we as

researchers and social scientists take into the field (Watts, 2011; Platt, 1983). Individuals' ideals cannot always be neutralised, and will therefore impact upon the research process (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley, 1990).

Thus a closer review of the above stated line of criticism reveals the prevalence of an element of subjectivity across all methodologies, given that it is human beings who decide and design research techniques and data outputs, based on sets of given values that may be operationalised as rules or formats and discipline-specific procedures (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994, Watts, 2011, Platt, 1983). As concluded by Schutz (1953) some degree of subjectivity will always be entailed in the construction of knowledge, or what scholars may view as facts. This challenge therefore impels the researcher to constantly critique his/her approach and the conclusions produced (Hine, 2000 and 2007; Markham, 2005). Moreover, mutual collaboration between the researcher and his/her informants not only ensures the elimination of bias from the conclusions drawn, but also increases transparency (Hackley, 1998) through the accumulation of data helpful to the textual reproduction of the social reality as viewed by the informants. These arguments were weighed and taken into account as the investigator accomplished *entrée*, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, as well as reporting. While Kozinets (2010) presents 'ethical research' as a distinct phase of a netnographic study, the investigator discovered that every stage of the inquiry required the observation of 'ethical' standards, and the steps taken to ensure such standards are discussed where applicable.

4.4. Chapter summary

This chapter has kicked off by reiterating the underlying research question as pertaining to the potential extension of the corporate branding paradigm to continents. Utilising *brand Africa* as one way to address the question, the discussion has underscored that exploring and explaining the meaning of Africa lies at the core of the analysis. To this end, the African diaspora was selected as a valuable source of insights given the group's historical and current interaction with the continent. The chapter has proceeded by identifying netnography as a methodology by which diasporan insights were accessed. Defining netnography as 'ethnography on the Internet', this chapter has evaluated the following technical procedures of the methodology: a clear definition of the research question for investigation; identification and selection of the community to be studied (*entrée*); participant observation; data analysis; reporting on the study and its implications, and; observation of ethical research standards (Kozinets 2002 and 2010). The analysis has also underlined the value of netnography to this study as lying in the methodology's capacity to investigate phenomena such as *brand Africa*, which would be otherwise difficult to assess at a global level due to space, time and financial constraints among other research affiliated challenges.

5. METHODOLOGY: TECHNICAL APPLICATION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter documents the netnographic steps implemented in addressing the question ‘what does Africa mean to the African diaspora, and how does *brand Africa* facilitate the continent’s sustainable development – what are the critical brand factors?’. Moreover, an inductive approach to theory development (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was adopted to make sense of the material collected. Key insights obtained were then extracted to build an interview guide for semi-structured interviews conducted with experts who work in the areas of international development and place marketing. Three of the interviews were conducted by email and the rest over the phone. The objective of soliciting more data through interviews was to triangulate and test the applicability of the netnography insights to Africa’s situation on the ground. Our sample of experts was purposefully chosen on the basis of the informants’ knowledge and experience of Africa’s development needs, as such expertise was deemed relevant in building a fuller understanding of the issues under scrutiny. The input from our triangulation process was further subjected to an inductive theory development process in an endeavour to create a coherent and robust theory on the role of *brand Africa* in sustainable development.

5.2. Netnographic inquiry

5.2.1. *Entrée into two online communities of African diaspora*

Apart from the need to access insights from a broader segment of the African diaspora online and therefore develop a rich analysis, the selection of the two communities was aimed at enabling a comparison and contrasting of views, as well as identification of reasons where perceptions may have been evaluated as varied between the two communities. The researcher followed closely the selection criteria recommended by Kozinets (2002 and 2010), also in line with the premise that gaining access to communities is key to both ethical and thorough analysis (ibid.), and it should be carefully planned (Harrington, 2003). Technically, the community should exhibit:

“(1) A more focused and research question–relevant segment, topic, or group; (2) higher ‘traffic’ of postings; (3) larger numbers of discrete message posters; (4) more detailed or descriptively rich data; and (5) more between-member interactions of the type required by the research question” (Kozinets, 2002, p. 63).

During a three-month period between October and December 2010, the researcher identified potential online communities for study. In order to meet the first criterion – “(1) a more focused and research question–relevant segment, topic, or group” – it was decided in the early phases of the study to select communities with strong affinity with Africa. A resolution was also made that the members of the chosen

community should be actively and regularly discussing a wide range of issues relating to Africa (as opposed to specific segments such as investors or tourists whose views would be more biased towards their subject of interest). This was deemed vital in defining both the scope and depth of the analysis. The identification of suitable communities kicked off with a Boolean search on Google in early November 2010. The researcher immediately discovered that there were more than a million social groups on the Internet who were affiliated with the continent of Africa in one way or the other. The investigator narrowed the findings to a shortlist of 150 of the more active communities through a more refined search on Google, which specified e.g. the use of English language as a prerequisite and excluded a set of key words linked to what may be viewed as ‘adult’ topics. To assess the focus of the community discussions, the investigator subsequently executed a key word in context review of the postings over an eight-week period using the communities’ search boxes.

The inquirer searched for the terms ‘Africa’, ‘African/Africans’, ‘sustainable development/development’, ‘progress’ ‘poverty’ and ‘image’. This exercise led to a reduction of potential communities for analysis to a total of five. Given the goal to assess the suitability of a distinct community as a source of insights for addressing the research objectives, revealing the researcher’s presence was not considered critical at the earliest stage of the selection process. Therefore, in line with other researchers, the investigator initially lurked (Kozinets, 2002 and 2010; Markham, 2005) as she familiarised herself with the pattern and content of interaction within each community. However, the researcher, the research and its goals as well as a research blog were disclosed to a sample of five communities at a later stage,

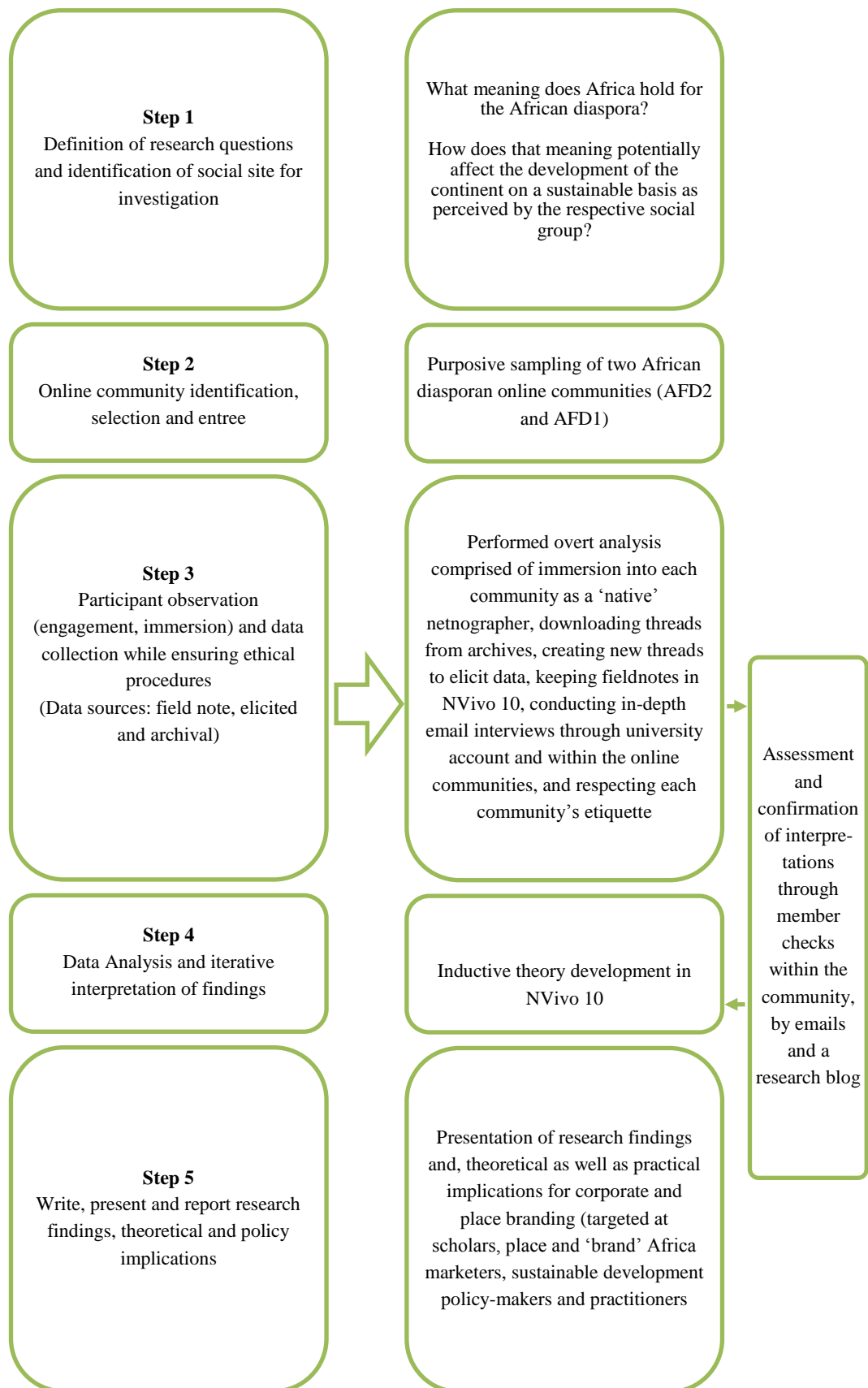


Figure 3: Netnographic inquiry of two African diasporan Communities

Source: Adapted from Kozinets (2010, p.61)

following a process of assessment subsequently outlined. In other words, an overt analysis was conducted with the communities that contributed to the development of this work. In the main, the decision to perform either a covert or an overt analysis rests with the investigator (Hammersley, 1990). There is however some disagreement among scholars on the issue of disclosing the researcher (self-disclosure) to the community, and its impact upon, as well as implications for the analysis. A few scholars are of the contention that the nature of the topic will be the basis of the decision on either to conduct a covert or overt investigation. In some cases obtaining recognition as an accepted member may be a challenging negotiation process, if at all possible to realise (Harrington, 2003). Disclosure may also risk curtailing the research when the topic of inquiry is deemed sensitive (Langer and Beckman, 2005).

Performing a covert analyses tends to be constrained by the requirement to observe some ethical standards (Markham, 2005), which include, but are not limited to: obtaining community members' informed consent prior to publishing 'their' material; ensuring them confidentiality or anonymity; and soliciting their feedback on interpretations and quotes (member checks) (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; Belk et al., 1988; Hammersley, 1990; Kozinets, 2002). Researchers tend to put strong emphasis on conducting ethical research through overt analyses. However the researcher has to be strategically prepared to deal with possible challenges such as "*cyberbullying*" (e.g. Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2008, in Xun and Reynolds, 2009, p.30) and potential boycotts (Kozinets, 2002 and 2010). The investigator took these issues into account in designing an overt analysis. She initiated the process by establishing rapport with other participants as recommended elsewhere (e.g.

Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Becker, 1958; Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955).

Moreover, in an endeavour to assess the fulfilment of the first criterion more rigorously – “...a more focused and research question–relevant segment, topic, or group” (Kozinets, 2002, p.63) – the researcher compiled a list of threads for, and from, each of the chosen five communities, which she exported into NVivo version 10, a computer assisted data analysis software programme. Using this software, the investigator resumed further content analysis of each single thread attached to the community name where it was generated, over a period of eight weeks. The NVivo software allowed the researcher to conduct classical content analysis following for instance Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2011). Specific keywords were searched and their frequency of use was retrieved from the dataset along with that of their synonyms. In one of the communities, the investigator discovered an inclination to systematically introduce for instance the subject of ‘Africa’s development’ in a single paragraph, yet engage in what the researcher evaluated as derogatory discussions that did not seem to contribute to the study in any way envisioned by the research objectives. The investigator consequently dropped the community from further inquiry.

Returning to the remaining four communities with a select number of threads – based on the output of the content analysis – the researcher reviewed the frequency with which posts were added, updated and commented on by diverse community members. The investigator treated these dynamics as indicative of the intensity of interaction. Each of the communities except one provided a transparent log of activities (that is, the date and time of the posting, number of responses to the thread, and in some cases, the location of the poster). In interrogating the frequencies, the

researcher also identified some correlations between the volume of postings, number of posters and traffic: The online communities exhibiting the highest level of ‘traffic’ also had the highest number of posters and volume of postings related to the research subject. The scrutiny moreover led the investigator to drop three communities from further inquiry in August 2011. Firstly, in one community, the researcher suspected that the owners or administrators of the community that omitted the publication of its log of activities appeared to post different messages under multiple identities. Observing and interacting with the members over an eight-month period – particularly the most active contributors (e.g. Kozinets, 2010) – had provided the researcher with the opportunity to acquaint herself with their writing styles, and language skills as well as community jargon. The community was consequently dropped from the sample.

In another community, systematic grammar errors and ostensibly incoherent statements tended to impair a good understanding of the discussions. Also, the same community appeared to copy and paste content from other (commercial) sources without giving credit. In seeking clarity over the origin of those insights to be potentially integrated in the work, the researcher would trace through copying and pasting some parts of the contributions into the Google search engine. She eventually resolved to drop the respective community from further investigation, following a number of incidences where material was presented without accreditation, and failure to convince the community administrators to revise their editorial standards. This left the research with two potential online communities to draw upon. The communities are identified as AFD1 and AFD2 (see appendix 2 for community attributes). The majority of the participants in both communities were (and as of

date, are) of African descent. The investigator identified two key social groups classified as Africans and African-Americans mainly based in USA and Europe. Interestingly, the AAs who thoroughly engaged with the subject of Africa perceived themselves as ‘Africans’, which was helpful in shaping an understanding of their views as shared online and beyond.

5.2.2. Data collection

Data collection was realised through participant observation. Thus upon gaining familiarity with the community norms and discourses, the researcher carefully started interacting, engaging, collaborating, relating and connecting with the members of the community in line with Kozinets (2002 and 2010). The investigator openly participated daily in the virtual interaction of each of the two communities observing things that happened and were mentioned, questioning individuals about their contributions and views. The researcher’s role was informal and carefully staged to allow her to become “*an integral part*” of the community (cf. Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955, p. 344) and fully immersed into each community.

Immersion into each community and data collection also benefitted from the researcher’s social background. Being of African descent and arguably a native netnographer (cf. Harrington, 2003) who was born and raised on the continent, had left the continent in her early 20s and been in diaspora for over a decade, meant that the researcher could relate to both African and African diasporan experiences. The researcher’s social background also meant that she could question the informants’ assumptions and hers, having lived and experienced Africa herself and to a certain degree, how the continent appears to be viewed externally. At the same time, it

neither prescribed nor suggested that the researcher uses her experiences and herself as her “*own research subject*” (cf. Hackley, 2006, p.75). Rather, it challenged the researcher to take an open-minded approach towards the discussions, questions raised and answers provided by the African diaspora. At the same time, an awareness of the researcher’s background also promoted the tendency to always question assumptions without the researcher imposing own judgement. Being aware of the researcher’s role as a native netnographer also revealed the need for the investigator to proceed with great caution so as to avoid ‘going native’, and therefore loss of a more critical stance. Therefore, the biggest researcher asset was arguably being African and African diaspora within the research context, and being with other diaspora, as well as among them; spending time together virtually and participating on the various threads with them, and; thus immersing into their world of knowledge about, and experience of Africa. Through this connection and engagement with the other members, the researcher learnt to understand their perspectives and their significance for the way the diasporan members interacted with their continent of origin. In other words, the social background appears to have easily and fundamentally facilitated access to the community and individual members’ perceptions.

The process of downloading data (retrieving texts and digital recordings) from each community’s archives, which commenced in the selection process as a means to determine the potential sites for inquiry, continued throughout the process of inquiry over fifteen months (cf. Kozinets, 2002 and 2010). The archived text constituted a large body of material crucial for the analysis as observed elsewhere by Markham (2005). The material served as the main source of the shared meaning attached to the

Africa by its diaspora. Moreover, elicited data – which the researcher co-created with the community (see, Kozinets 2010) –, was collected through the creation of new threads and (in)depth interviews. While the researcher participated in active discussions, she minimised her role in information search and provision to other members as well as generating new information. This was viewed as a measure to limit influencing the discourses and ultimately the meanings that were constructed by the collective being investigated, as well as the ‘natural setting’ within which interaction occurred. The investigator’s role consisted mainly of steering or reigniting debates by posing more specific questions on issues raised prior and during the investigator’s time within the communities. The aim of doing so was to elicit clearer ‘answers’ and monitor any trends in the views expressed as some material had been archived for over five years. The investigator also created new threads addressing new questions that emerged from on-going discussions and the analysis of past debates, as well as to fill the gaps envisioned in the data. She also made the realisation that the most popular issues tended to be recast into debate with slight topic reformulations.

A total of fifteen in-depth interviews emails was conducted with the African diaspora in online communities (not experts) either within the community or through emails. The informants were among the more than fifty-five potential informants contacted by the researcher, and who also consented to their online contributions being analysed within this study (see appendices: 3 for informants and 4 for the threads analysed). Nonetheless only a few most active participants tended to provide elaborate viewpoints, and show keenness for discussing the ‘actual’ subject through emails (as exposed by the citations utilised in this work). In some cases most of the

participants would react to discussions within the community with phrases like ‘co-signed’, ‘I think so’, ‘spot on’ or ‘agreed’. Email interviews were chosen for the reason that they tend to solicit well-contemplated responses unlike other tools such as Skype (Kozinets, 2010).

The interviews were carried out through the researcher’s university email address and within the online communities themselves. The open-ended questions that constituted each interview were posed as follow-ups on views expressed within the community, or elicitation of more specific details on members’ backgrounds, views and feelings regarding the phenomenon under investigation (cf. Charmaz, 2006). Through the interviews, the researcher could enter “*into conversation with... the participants*” (Becker, 1958) in order to elicit their individual interpretation of own experience (Charmaz, 2006) with Africa and its development. The indepth interviews were also viewed as enabling the researcher to achieve a deeper comprehension of the “*lived experience of online community participants*” (Kozinets 2010, p.47), within the online environment and beyond (McLelland, 2002). Expressed in different terms, the investigator could probe meanings beyond face value through the interviews, while obtaining a more solid grasp of the observations made online.

In some cases, the inquirer set up basic surveys, which were integrated to supplement data (cf. Hammersley, 1990) collected through the means described above. As the inquiry intended to uncover meanings and behaviours associated with Africa and specific to a community, the “*topics, themes and scale items*” for surveys were generated from the observations made within the community and its socio-

cultural context: Rather than be derived from secondary literature (cf. Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994, p.490). Furthermore, the goal of surveys was not to test any casual relationships given the interpretivistic nature of the netnographic inquiry. Instead, the surveys were designed to assist in providing clarity on dimensions such as gender or age, or general consensus on a point raised in a debate. The use of a survey was also conceived of as principally providing the researcher with an additional opportunity for triangulation. The researcher also kept some field notes in the NVivo programme as discussed under noting further below.

Data collection was ceased upon saturation (cf. Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Kozinets, 2002 and 2010). In order to check for saturation, the researcher reformulated the titles of the key threads and most intensely debated issues, posted those back in the two communities and evaluated the discussions. The investigator then concluded the process of data gathering once it had become evident that no more novel insights could be elicited by the inquiries. Furthermore, informed consent was gained by approaching the members directly after posting a thread announcing the research, and with a general request for collaboration. Several of the participants allowed the investigator, through written consent, to use their online identities within this study. It also became clear that the participants sought to establish trust for the researcher, as much as she aimed to ensure that their contributions were authentic. However pseudo names (e.g. Josh or Tim) are used within this thesis in order to protect the contributors' privacy, even if their comments may be traced through a simple Google search. In some cases the contributions are available in the public domain.

5.2.3. Data analysis and interpretation

This research adopted an inductive approach to theory development (cf. Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Kozinets, 2002 and 2010). This approach was utilised following closely the premise that:

“Rigorous and effective theory building in marketing must be founded on a reflexive understanding of how meaning is constructed in the social world in order to be meaningful in and to the social world of marketing”
(Hackley 1998, p. 6).

The data evaluation approach was in alignment with the procedural steps outlined by Kozinets (2002 and 2010) as coding, noting, abstracting and comparing, checking and refinement, generalising, and theorising. In conducting these analytical procedures, the researcher also consulted with other studies (e.g. Charmaz, 2006) and employed NVivo 10 to facilitate the analysis. The utilisation of NVivo 10 was deemed vital in enabling both transparency of the qualitative evaluation of the many thousands of pages (cf. Hutchison et al. 2010), and the analysis of data of various sizes and types such as audio and video files photos and documents.

Inductive theory development was adopted as a means for enabling the construction of fresh theory *“from the ground”* based on the accumulated data (Goulding, 2000, p.261), rather than deducting and testing hypotheses from existing models (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Kozinets, 2002 and 2010). As argued in the introductory phase of this thesis, there currently exists no published framework for understanding an arguably complex construct such as *brand Africa*, or more

generally, a supranational place brand. The process of exploring such entity therefore required the researcher in congruity with the logic of inductive theory development, to commence data analysis and interpretation simultaneously with the participant observation (data collection), and progress the evaluation throughout all stages of the inquiry (cf. Kozinets, 2002 and 2010; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The commencement of data analysis right at the beginning of the data collection phase helped to identify lines of inquiry for further exploration. A provisional data analysis (Becker, 1958) generated initial codes (cf. Charmaz, 2006) that were instrumental in sensitising and directing the investigator to issues for further exploration (cf. Becker, 1958; Charmaz, 2006).

Analytic coding was realised by an initial line by line labelling, classification and naming of segments of all the data collected (cf. Kozinets, 2010). In doing so, the researcher paid attention to actions, beliefs and processes communicated by each text (cf. Charmaz, 2006). The codes, which are identified as nodes in NVivo (and from here henceforth) were generated from a full analysis of the documents downloaded from the two communities, email interviews and fieldnotes. Following Charmaz's (2006) and Kozinets (2010) recommendations, the researcher created nodes that closely reflected the African diasporan members' standpoints and actions from their perspectives. Thus the nodes emerged from within the data, rather than from preconceived classifications. Each node contained items that the researcher considered to be unique in one way or the other. The different nodes technically represented what Miles and Huber (1994) relatively refer to as "*intellectual bins containing many discrete behaviours and actions*" (p.18). This observation was relevant to the analysis, given that all virtual discourses are social acts and

behaviours that reveal something fundamental about the African diaspora's understanding and interaction with the continent (cf. Kozinets, 2010, Hine, 2000 and 2007; Markham, 2005). Moreover, in line with Kozinets' (2010) guidelines, the researcher constantly asked herself about the deeper meaning of each text, questioning what was stated there and how it could be defined, as well as how that perception potentially developed as suggested by Charmaz (2006), Goulding (2000) and Hutchison's et al. (2010). Reflection constantly led to revision and refinement of the nodes as the analysis progressed. The researcher also added annotations to her nodes, which she referred to in creating follow up questions and further data collection.

During the noting process, which is traditionally classified as "*memoing*" (Kozinets, 2010, p.119), the researcher scribbled her reflections as annotations in NVivo, consistent with the recommendations provided for instance by Johnston (2006). The notes were written immediately during the course of interaction online or soon thereafter, with the aim to document the researcher's impressions and evaluation of the experienced situation (cf. Goulding, 2000). Furthermore, and as stated above, some of the notes were composed in the process of the analysis, for example upon receiving responses to email interview questions. As suggested by Kozinets (2010), the researcher compiled some notes with some of them written as questions to herself as she "*memo[-ed]*" (p.122) in NVivo "*about the posting*" (p.122). In instances where it was impossible for the investigator to immediately create some notes in NVivo, she tape-recorded her reflections on the experiences as they occurred to her and later transcribed them. There are two concrete ways in which note taking added value to this analysis. Firstly, and as observed elsewhere, the notes

provided the researcher with “*a bank of ideas*” which she subsequently consulted in mapping out the emerging theory (cf. Goulding 2000, p.262). Secondly the scribbled notes partly shaped the analysis of the observations and promoted a deeper investigation of emergent themes (cf. Hutchinson et al., 2010; Johnston 2006).

In abstracting and comparing, the investigator started off by ordering and filtering the material. The goal of such process was to identify any related phrases and their relationships across the coded data (cf. Kozinets 2010). Nodes were connected within NVivo resulting in the development of “*conceptual constructs*” (Kozinets, 2010, p.119). Subsequently, the researcher compared similarities and differences across the data (ibid.). The process of checking and refinement involved re-immersing into the two African diasporan communities to collect more data and permit the scrutiny and refinement of the researcher’s understanding of identified conceptual constructs within the dataset, their differences and linkages and explanations thereof (cf. Kozinets, 2010). Tentative theories were formulated by the researcher, some of them as questions and others as general claims that were all brought back to the communities for discussion. This step also permitted the investigator to conduct member checks of the interpretations. Again, the researcher analytically coded, took notes, compared and contrasted the new data, and linked it to her interpretations as she advanced the analysis towards generalising. This latter process involved the development of a set of generalisations that explained consistencies within the dataset (cf. Kozinets, 2010), leading to the creation of major general categories, and a model best representing the collected data (cf. Becker, 1958). In theorising, new theory was constructed by juxtaposing the generalisations with an extant corpus of knowledge as argued by Kozinets (2010).

Like any other research method, inductive theory development has its own limitations. Firstly, the broad and diverse sources of information ranging from photos, texts, fieldnotes and interview transcripts may impede a smooth and straightforward data interpretation (Dominguez et al., 2007; Xun and Reynolds, 2009). This may lead to shallow and “*hasty interpretations*” of the findings (Rokka, 2010, p.383). Paradoxically, the very same complex data sources and methods of elicitation provide opportunities for triangulation (cf. Denzin, 2006), and a detailed portrayal of the community’s understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Kozinets, 2002 and 2010). Therefore, one may argue that where ‘relevant’, visual images, screen shots, links to audio files and transcriptions of audio files, as well as quotes may serve as additional evidence or substantiating material for the conclusions drawn.

Another possible weakness relates to whether the researcher constructs the data itself about the studied phenomenon. The perceived problem revolves around the issue of the researcher’s predispositions and the effect on the validity of the emergent theory. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, some observers proclaim that (qualitative) researchers hold particular ideals, which motivate the kind of questions asked, and the approach towards answering the questions, as well as accounts provided as answers (e.g. Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley, 1990). Such ideals cannot always be neutralised, and will therefore impact upon the research process (ibid.) leading to constructed knowledge (cf. Schutz, 1953). In an attempt to counteract this, the researcher mutually collaborated with the informants (cf. Hackley, 1998), double-checking her interpretation of the informants’ views with the participants directly within the thread, or through the creation of new threads posing

specific questions as explained earlier on.

Moreover, this study was conducted in view of Charmaz's (2006) fundamental argument that in general, inductive theory development forms an interpretive paradigm. Hence, it places emphasis on constructivism in which there is no clear-cut objectivity or reality (Charmaz, 2006). Instead, an interpretive approach to social knowledge was adopted (Charmaz, 2006; Schutz, 1953) which acknowledged that the meaning attached to the continent of Africa by the African diaspora online, and their perceptions regarding the continent's sustainable development may not be viewed as standardized across contexts or people. Rather, it is a product of their social interaction (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Therefore trustworthiness of the results is more critical than validity, with that trustworthiness being reflected by the way the results are presented, and supported by evidence and transparency (Kozinets, 2010).

5.2.4. Reporting

Within this research, evidence is presented as it came to the researcher's attention during the substantive analysis (cf. Becker 1958). However, is it is neither feasible nor scholarly to publish all evidence in support of any set of claims, which may pose the problem of how to present the proof adequately (ibid.). Nonetheless, the investigator allows the reader to immerse into the discussion by offering some elaborate accounts in their original forms to support the theoretical premises advanced herein as recommended by researchers elsewhere (e.g. Miles and Huberman, 1994).

5.3. Semi Structured Interviews: Triangulation with Experts

The researcher extracted a set of concepts from the data, and tested these further on with expert opinions by means of semi-structured interviews. The aim of conducting the interviews was to develop a robust theory based on a critical assessment of the applicability of ideas provided by the online communities to place branding/marketing and sustainable development. Eleven semi-structured interviews were therefore carried out with experts in the fields of international development and place marketing (see appendix 5). Three of the interviews were conducted by email, and the remainder were held over the phone. The telephone interviews proved to be more effective in immediately clarifying and following up on the subject matter once raised, as compared to the written format. The investigator therefore focussed on the telephone interview format, with each interview lasting between twenty-five and thirty minutes, and tape-recorded.

The interview guide was applied in order to direct the interview, and ensure that the central issues identified through the netnographic inquiry were addressed by each interviewee. Therefore as conducted elsewhere by de Chernatony and Dall'Omo Riley (1998), the questions were left open ended, which permitted the researcher to elicit the experts' opinions from their own perspectives without imposing the investigator's preconceptions. Also in line with these two researchers Chernatony and Dall'Omo Riley (1998), the investigator allowed the interviewees to talk as much as they found suitable. She noted down questions while the experts were talking, and asked for clarification at the end of each statement. There were variations in the lengths of responses on the same issue (e.g. Chernatony and

Dall’Olmo Riley, 1998). However, each response and interview was analysed following the same steps of inductive theory development, as described above. In presenting the findings, the researcher allows the reader to immerse into the discussion, by offering detailed citations to support the emergent theory.

5.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the implementation of netnography to investigate the meaning attached to Africa by the African diaspora online, and identify the significance of *brand Africa* to sustainable development, as a step for addressing the underlying research question. The researcher conducted an overt analysis of two online communities of African diaspora, chosen from a shortlist of 150 possible sites for investigation. Data collection by means of elicitation, downloads from community archives, fieldnotes and in-depth interviews was realised through participant observation. Inductive theory development was then conducted to make sense of the accumulated material. To facilitate the analysis, the researcher exported the dataset into NVivo 10, a qualitative data analysis programme which promotes not only the transparency of the analysis, but also the evaluation of various data ranging from audio and video files to photos, documents, of various kinds and sizes.

The key interpretations were then submitted to the field for member checks. The aim was to develop a robust theory based on critical assessment of the applicability of the ideas provided by the online communities to place branding/marketing and sustainable development. The second stage of the analysis consequently involved triangulating the obtained netnographic insights with experts in the areas of place marketing and (sustainable) development. An interview guide was therefore developed from the refined themes, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with eleven experts. Inductive theory development was applied once again to analyse the data, and build a theory as subsequently presented in the findings. In discussing the findings the researcher promotes the immersion of the reader into the discussion by offering detailed citations to support the emergent theory.

6. DEFINING BRAND AFRICA

*“You are not a country, Africa,
You are a concept
Fashioned in our minds, each to each,
To hide our fears,
To dream our separate dreams”
(Nicol, 1964).*

6.1. Introduction

This chapter commences the analysis of our field evidence in an endeavour to establish the conceptual structure of a supranational place entity such as *brand Africa* and its linkage to the corporate branding paradigm, if any. To this end, the meaning attached to Africa by the African diaspora is investigated before linking the analysis to corporate branding. Firstly the investigation establishes that, while a place such as Africa is a complex geographical zone, the people are central to how the place is described. Remarkably, the diasporan portrayals of Africa do not project a clear delineation of Africa as a geographical entity and its inhabitants. Allusions to Africa are people centric, and the construct is used to signify people who are something (for example, they are poor) owing to the claims that they do/do not do something that they should (for instance, producing sufficient food).

Collectively, people perform particular actions that convey something about the place (as the people), and accomplish something for the people. If viewed as the people, a place can be theoretically regarded as some form of human actor within a global context. In relating our work to corporate branding, we conclude that a

supranational place entity such as *brand Africa* represents a people centric concept, of which meaning derives from the internal people in the same sense that a corporate service brand is defined on the basis of what the organisational members do collectively from an outsiders' perspective. We contend that conceptually, *brand Africa* closely resembles a corporate service brand, and this observation marks the genesis of an answer to the underlying research question on the extent to which the corporate branding paradigm is applicable to a continent. We further argue that, given that places are meaningful to individuals, there is a likelihood of a formation of consumer-place brand relationships as revealed by the African diasporan members' choice to identify with Africa or not. The chapter concludes with a synopsis of the overall discussion presented herein.

6.2. Interpreting Africa

Our research discovers the construct Africa as assessed by the African diaspora to be replete with ideas that allude to African people and their collective actions. Africa may be a label for a geographical entity, however the diasporan descriptions of the concept represent a people-centric evaluation of what Africans do, or are believed as doing locally yet within a global context. Such assessment translates into notions of what Africa is from a diasporan perspective. The interpretation does not appear to lucidly discriminate between the continent as a habitat and its citizens. Instead it situates people at the core of several ongoing debates on Africa's progress. For example this becomes visible in discussions pertaining to issues that can be broadly conceptualised as barriers to Africa's (sustainable) development, as revealed by

Josh⁹ (Male, AFD2, USA) in a thread on why Africa “*fails at life*” (AFD2) as follows:

“Africa could/should have it going on but honestly they lack the knowledge... intelligence...they don't understand how to grow food for themselves... they just don't have the creativity to start true farms and transport the food to their people in large scale” (Josh, Male, AFD2, USA).

Josh (Male, AFD2, USA) refers to Africa as “*they*” implying that he is talking about people. He goes on to outline a number of features associated with human beings such as the lack of intelligence, knowledge, creativity and understanding of farming. In their combination, the issues mentioned by Josh establish the idea of Africa as relatively limited in intellectual capacities, which is again a human feature (in making sense of the world, individuals do not usually conceive of fauna and flora as ignorant). In essence, Josh (Male, AFD2, USA) implies that Africans are not entrepreneurial enough to set up effective farms (this is revealed by the statement that “*they just don't have creativity to start true farms*”. Josh attributes Africans’ insufficient progress (as extracted from the viewpoint that they “*could/should have it going*”) to both ignorance and lack of innovativeness in operating what can be regarded as commercial food production and distribution. In a debate on Africa’s perceived global competitiveness, another diasporan member further draws attention to the concept of ignorance by somewhat sarcastically adding that:

⁹ To emphasise, pseudo names are used throughout this analysis.

“Someone actually got the bright idea to compare a broken down, inept, uneducated Africa to an economic powerhouse like Europe or USA [this happens] only on Community [AFD1], [laugh out loud]” (Terry, Male, USA, AFD1 and AFD2).

Terry (Male, USA, AFD1 and AFD2) offers an evaluation of Africa as neither skilled nor effective (*“inept”*), having poor level or lack of education (*“uneducated”*) and dysfunctional (*“broken down”*). Similar to Josh, Terry does not say for instance, ‘the people who live in Africa’, however, the qualities that he identifies as typifying Africa are characteristics of people. We learn from such diasporan views that in particular, the perceived inability of Africans to sufficiently cater for their food requirements signifies something about Africa, namely lack of self-sufficiency despite potential to do so. Another diasporan member exposes this assumption in the following manner:

“With so many resources, the irony is, Africa is starving. Everyone knows that Africa is not in a position to produce food for itself” (Mia, Female, AFD2, France).

Similar to Josh (Male, AFD2, USA), Mia (Female, AFD2, France) implies that Africa is a group of living beings who are commonly regarded as facing chronic hunger despite ownership of sufficient resources – which they are not utilised – for satisfying their needs. In their variety, the diasporan representations of Africa resemble an anthropomorphosis of the continent (Africa is attributed human characteristics, and therefore seen as a living being). From this perspective the

construct Africa becomes an allusion to the people with certain perceived qualities that are connected to something that they: do/are doing (e.g. starving); do not do/are not doing but should be doing (e.g. producing sufficient food, as a value creation process), and; are undergoing as a result of their action or lack of it (e.g. starvation). We posit that from a diasporan perspective the construct Africa connotes people who are something (e.g. starving) ‘because’ they do/do not so something to address their situation (e.g. not sufficiently entrepreneurial to address their food needs internally across the continent). Represented from Josh’s (Male, AFD2, USA) portrayal cited further above, the argument can be seen as such, ‘Africans are starving as they are not acting adequately to change their circumstances’ (cf. Frese, 2009). Moreover, the perceived actions and their outcomes (or lack of them) tend to trigger specific emotions among diasporan individuals. Josh reveals this in adding that:

“It's kind of sad to watch because Africa is a continent that really should be doing well. They have EVERYTHING and yet they have nothing...”
(Josh, Male, AFD2, USA).

Josh (Male, AFD2, USA) feels that the process of starving is an unhappy experience, given that Africans have sufficient resources to ensure self-sufficiency yet they are poor. He depicts Africa’s state as a paradox in the sense that the people ‘have everything yet nothing’. Expressing the same sentiments, Sean (Male, AFD1, USA) offers the following viewpoint during a discussion on Africa’s perceived global competitiveness:

“Personally I find it sickening that a place like Africa, with all that resource and potential still has, [and] still needs foreign aid to feed itself and treat curable diseases” (Sean, Male, AFD1, USA).

Evidently, Sean (Male, AFD1, USA) does not critique fauna and flora. Instead, he refers to the people in claiming that Africa depends on external food donations. Hinting at Africa’s lack of self-sufficiency, Sean reveals that Africans’ failure to generate enough food supplies internally is apparently nauseating to him. In general, the diaspora makes it clear that from its standpoint, Africans’ dependence on foreign aid to feed themselves is not only paradoxical for a *“place”* (Sean, Male, AFD1, USA) with an abundance of socio-economic reserves and potential, but also unacceptable. There are numerous perceptions and judgements extracted from our data that may appear disjointed in the first instance, yet they all serve to shed light on the African diaspora’s understanding of Africa as the people.

Several examples of such insights as stated above are discernible in the various segments of our empirical analysis. For instance the topic of African integration is comprised of ideas that may appear random, yet evidently personify the place, e.g.: *“Africa must unite”* (Ray, Male, UK, AFD1) given that the lack of unity makes it *“very difficult for Africa to speak with one voice”* (Expert11, International Financial Institution). Alternatively, *“Africa is thriving but will hit a big wall due to their ongoing genocide”* (Doug, Male, USA, AFD1), or claims like *“Africa is a violent continent, no two ways about it”* (Sean, Male, USA, AFD1). Relationships can be drawn between these statements. For example, the lack of unity potentially leads to genocide and poverty, or limited international political and economic influence.

More importantly, the value of such observations within this section lies in that they cite incidents, processes and events that are produced by people (cf. von Mises, 1996, p.43) and therefore, are outcomes of collective actions that influence how a place is defined. For example, it is people who unite, speak with one voice, thrive, and initiate or are affected by genocide and violence.

On the basis of our field evidence we consequently theorise that *people are the place, and Africa is the African people – or the inhabitants of the continent*. What Africans collectively do defines Africa, and ultimately the people themselves as Africa. The scholar von Mises (1996) demonstrates this at a national level of analysis, where he sweepingly concludes that, *“Nobody ever perceived a nation without perceiving its members... actions of individuals constitute the collective”* (von Mises, 1996, p.43), and the collective is not separate from the ‘place’ (Gundry, 1987). Our conjecture that the place is the people and vice versa echoes Gundry’s (1987) assertion advanced in his review of *The New Jerusalem* as the people. Gundry (1987) maintains that, *“a city, like a region or a country or even the whole world, may mean both its inhabitants and their dwelling place”* (p.25). However, our analysis transcends the idea of ‘city’ referred to by Gundry (1987). If ideas about a construct representing a meta region such as Africa are grounded in evaluations of its inhabitants, we then argue in line with Schneider (1987). Writing within the field of organisational studies, Schneider (1987) asserts that *“the people make the place”*. However within this study, we advance the argument that *“the people make the place”* in a metaphorical sense. The people give the place a meaning through their collective actions or lack of them, as undertaken over time (or not). Collective actions endow a meta-region with meaning as understood by outsiders, and as

asserted by von Mises (1996), they have a historical significance pivotal to the emergent meaning.

Also, observers cannot separate actions from their enactors although they can differentiate actors from their motivators or enforcers (Schutz, 1967). For this reason, we proclaim that if places carried any DNA – Deoxyribonucleic Acid – African people would be presented in this thesis as the DNA of the construct Africa. For instance, another diasporan member further reveals how the African diaspora persistently holds the people and their native habitat together, thereby blurring the boundary between the two entities as follows:

“My major issue that I have with Africa is that we are consumers and not producers... We are not doing enough to better prepare ourselves for the future. Where are our car producing plants, clothing factories, or our finished products that the world buys from us? Why do we continue to look to others for help, when we have all we need in abundance in Africa?” (Neil, Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA).

Neil (Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA) draws attention to the role of Africa in value creation as reflected by his juxtaposition of consumption with production. Giving more weight to our conjecture that ‘Africa is the people’, Neil categorises the role of Africans as dependency and consumption in a global market. Therefore from his viewpoint, Africans are a rather passive actor in the value creation process. Neil’s (Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA) analysis is supported for example by the AfDB (2013a), UNCTAD (2012), UNDP (2013a) and WEC (2013). These agencies

observe that Africa has not yet developed the key industries for processing resource extractions and agricultural produce into finished goods for both domestic and export markets.

Our logic becomes more tangible when Africa is contrasted with for example the USA. In alleging that “*America [is perceived] as bullying, polluting, domineering, imperialistic, ignorant, fat, selfish, inconsistent, arrogant, self-absorbed, greedy, [and] hypocritical*” (Dinnie, 2005 p.406) researchers are merely referring to notions about the American people. This palette of ideas is persistently formed in such a complex manner that fails, possibly for simplicity, to delineate between the people and their habitat, while clearly alluding to the people. In interpreting the two entities holistically (‘place’ and people), such portrayals also bring in the foreground a certain perceived character of the place, regardless of the diversity and complexity of the place in question. Such categories as noted by Dinnie (2005) may not be applicable to all Americans, yet they are the ‘reality’ to those who perceive them. That ‘reality’ shapes how the individuals relate to America.

On the basis of our interpretation of diasporan ideas regarding Africa, we reiterate that Africa is the people. However, we are also aware that the name Africa represents a geographical zone with specific forms of fauna and flora. Interestingly, we discover that the wealth of geographical diversity across the continent of Africa appears to be of less relevance to the African diasporan understanding of what Africa is – although the continent’s multifaceted nature has been popularised as one of the most attractive and therefore competitive characteristics of the place (e.g. Stanley, 1899). Taking into account that geographical features also render a place with

meaning (e.g. the Swiss Alps in the case of Switzerland, or Safari in the case of Sub Saharan Africa) we contend that the people dimension can be categorised as a subset of a more intricate meaning of a supranational region such as Africa. This observation suggests that the people dimension can be situated in a bigger set of ideas about a place also as a geographical region. Therefore, we conclude that a supranational place such as Africa comprises of a blend of mental dimensions characterising the people on the basis of their perceived collective undertakings, and some geographical attributes of the region. However, the people dimension emerges from the diasporan descriptions of Africa as more dominant than the geographical attributes.

The representations of Africa are created in an intense environment where personal attacks are exchanged among the diasporan members online (see appendix 6 for a few examples of insults traded between parties). Africa tends to be a tense and controversial subject, commanding a pattern of connotations that circulate around the African people regardless of whether the impressions are favourable, derogatory or neutral. The emergent diasporan representations of Africa are also linked to an understanding of whether the actions enacted by Africans on the ground accomplish or fail to achieve particular outcomes central to their lives. The accomplishments, or lack of them, are then related to ideas about what Africans are, with the interpretation maturing into an epitome of the entity called Africa. We contend that Africans' perceived lack of self-sufficiency in food production lies at the core of the diasporan understanding of Africa. Hence, broadly, the categories *dependent and underdeveloped* appear to function as the 'true' representations of Africans, and therefore Africa (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Ideally, actions are purposeful

and they accomplish particular outcomes (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966; von Mises, 1996). However, Africans' actions are viewed as failing to solve the problem of poverty, leading to dependence and underdevelopment.

Interestingly, we identify significant conceptual overlaps between the diasporan representations of Africa and the 'Victorian/Western' perception. As reviewed in our literature analysis, the Victorians/'Westerners' perceived Africa as ignorant, poor, helplessly in need of aid and by implication, dependent (e.g. Kuehn, 2009; Jarosz, 1992; Osei and Gdabamosi, 2011; Mugobo and Ukpere; 2011). The negative image of Africa (as constructed by the Victorians and criticised by contemporary scholars), is comprised of dimensions that describe the African people. Some of the categories used by the 'Victorians/Westerners' have been exposed in this study as part of the central elements of the diasporan understanding of what Africa is. We maintain that the 'Victorian/Western' and diasporan representations of Africa are both referring to people, and the Africa that the 'Victorians/Westerners' projected with an apparent disapproval may have been the African people themselves.

6.2.1. Africans and their collective actions

The categories that oversimplify and define Africa, its diverse inhabitants and their perceived collective actions as an indivisible entity, point to the characterisation of the continent as a human actor or performer within the global context. Again referring to the description of USA cited above, its conception reflects a process of personifying the over fifty States as a single human body which appears and behaves in certain ways. We argue that such homogenisation is equally applicable to Africa. The place is anthropomorphised into a doer or performer, who undertakes a variety

of actions and activities along the dimensions of politics, socio-culture, economics and environment.

Our contention is grounded in an assortment of diasporan discussions, some of which are framed: as questions, e.g. *“Why does Africa fail at life”* (AFD2, also see appendix 4); evaluative statements, e.g. *“Africa as a whole is NOT doing well...[it] has failed”* (Josh, Male, AFD2, USA), or *“if Africa relies on others all the time it will never learn [to tackle its problems]”* (Zola, Male, AFD1, China); comparative viewpoints that are supplied as justifications for evaluative statements, e.g. *“We could also talk about the failings of Romania...Russia [is] doing bad as well...Even so...no one was conquered as Africa was”* (Josh, Male, AFD2, USA); and potential recommendations for solving the continent’s perceived ills, e.g. *“Before Africa can truly accomplish real economic growth and prosperity, she must first remove her post traumatic colonial past”* (Mas, Male, AFD1, USA), and *“Africa needs to embrace regional trade”* (Kali, Male, AFD1, UK), in order to promote economic prosperity long-term.

We contend on the basis of the examples of the diasporan statements cited above, that there is a potential progression of collective actions from endowing a place with meaning, into their conceptualisation as synonymous with the undertakings of the place in question. We postulate that the place is the people; the people act collectively, and so does the place. Hence as a group of people, Africa theoretically becomes a human actor who performs a number of activities over time. Those undertakings ultimately form the substance of who/what the (place) actor is, as perceived by outsiders. Additional support for our view can be mined from

mainstream daily discourses on nations and supranational regions. To illustrate, statements such as ‘America or Europe has launched war against terror, Africa has secured a trade deal with Asia, Scotland has voted No, Brazil has elected a first female president and India has spoken (politically)’ make reference to specific groups of people who collectively and employing various means, decide and embark on an identifiable course of action. Their actions have an objective, and they effectively achieve an outcome (or are designed to do so). When realised the actions become classified as having been executed by America, Europe, Africa, Brazil, China or India. The actions also translate into abstractions of what the place stands for. To illustrate, the election of a first female president or first African American president signifies a Brazil/USA that is gradually moving towards more tolerance and equality, even if there may be internal political divisions within the place. Given that the actions are purposeful and based on the collectives’ ideals (von Mises, 1996), they generate (or are supposed to create) some form of socio-economic value for the place as a doer (actor).

Certainly, a fine line can be drawn between the actions of leaders and those of ordinary citizens. While a leadership representing a place performs actions such as ‘launching war’, other actions are realised by ordinary citizens (e.g. electing the first female president). In some cases, it may even be the actions of leaders that give more visibility to a place, and become a common source of ideas about what a place is (and as an actor who stands for particular socio-cultural values to outsiders – if interpreted in line with von Mises (1996). However an attempt to separate leaders’ actions from those enacted by ordinary citizens makes the notion of people even more interesting to our analysis. Like ordinary citizens, leaders are among the people

who inhabit a place. Leaders (e.g. the first female president) are also chosen, and ideally empowered by the ordinary people within a given habitat. Remarkably – and at least not from a common man/woman’s perspective – the interpretation of what a place does, does not seem to be divided along whether the visible actions are undertaken by ordinary citizens (e.g. Americans selecting a first African American president) or by leaders (e.g. America politicians launching war against terror). Rather the actions are still attributed to the place as of being of and by the place, therefore typifying the place.

We contend that like a big nation such as USA or another supranational region such as the EU, the continent of Africa occupies a space on the global stage where it performs (or not) certain actions with perceived success or failure. The discussions among the Africa diaspora online however reveal that the continent has so far accumulated considerable failures. Moreover, the actions undertaken by the place (as the people) are evaluated on their capacity to affect individuals who identify themselves as connected to the place through heritage (e.g. the African diaspora). Hence ideas such as Africa’s rise – as in attaining significant socio-economic and political progress – potentially strengthen the diasporan emotional attachment to Africa. Another diasporan member, Barry (Male, AFD1, USA) makes the assumption visible by stating that: *“if Africa rises, descendants of slaves will be proud to announce their African roots”*. This reveals a sense of pride among the diaspora which potentially emanates from a transformed continent. The African diaspora may take more pride in being associated with an ‘achiever’. Another diasporan member provides the following insights in an email interview on Africa’s development and its implications:

“Imagine if ‘switch’, Africa is the now USA, how many African Americans would say I am ‘African’... If Africa changes, that will be a good thing, it makes you proud to say look, this is where I come from. You can say that to the whole world without shame [because] you have something to show” (Mia, Female, AFD2, France).

In essence, there are three concepts that Mia (Female, AFD2, France) brings to our attention namely identity, shame, and pride associated with achievement. Shame is related to pride and self-awareness (Lewis, 1995). Mia makes this evident in remarking that Africa’s socio-economic transformation will be an achievement that will encourage some diasporan individuals to proudly affirm their identity as Africans and belonging to Africa. In general, there is the belief that *“many Afro descendants are ashamed of Africa, and will always be”* (Jacob, Male, AFD1, USA), *“because Africa is described as a poor continent”* (Barry, Male, AFD1, USA). We infer from these viewpoints that Africa’s poverty is translated into a perceived loss of honour and respect among the diasporan members most developed places like USA. Matching USA’s level of development signifies the riddance of poverty, and a modification of how Africa is described (or its meaning) in a favourable way to the broader diaspora. Consequently Mia (Female, AFD2, France) envisions diasporan pride as ultimately replacing shame. She hints at a potential boosting of self-worth/self-esteem among some African Americans. The latter potentially stems from being appreciated as connected to a more progressive Africa. Supporting Mia’s perspective, Expert88 (Male, Historian, France) ¹⁰ elaborates as follows:

¹⁰Expert11 also shared some of his email interview points within AFD1 and AFD2

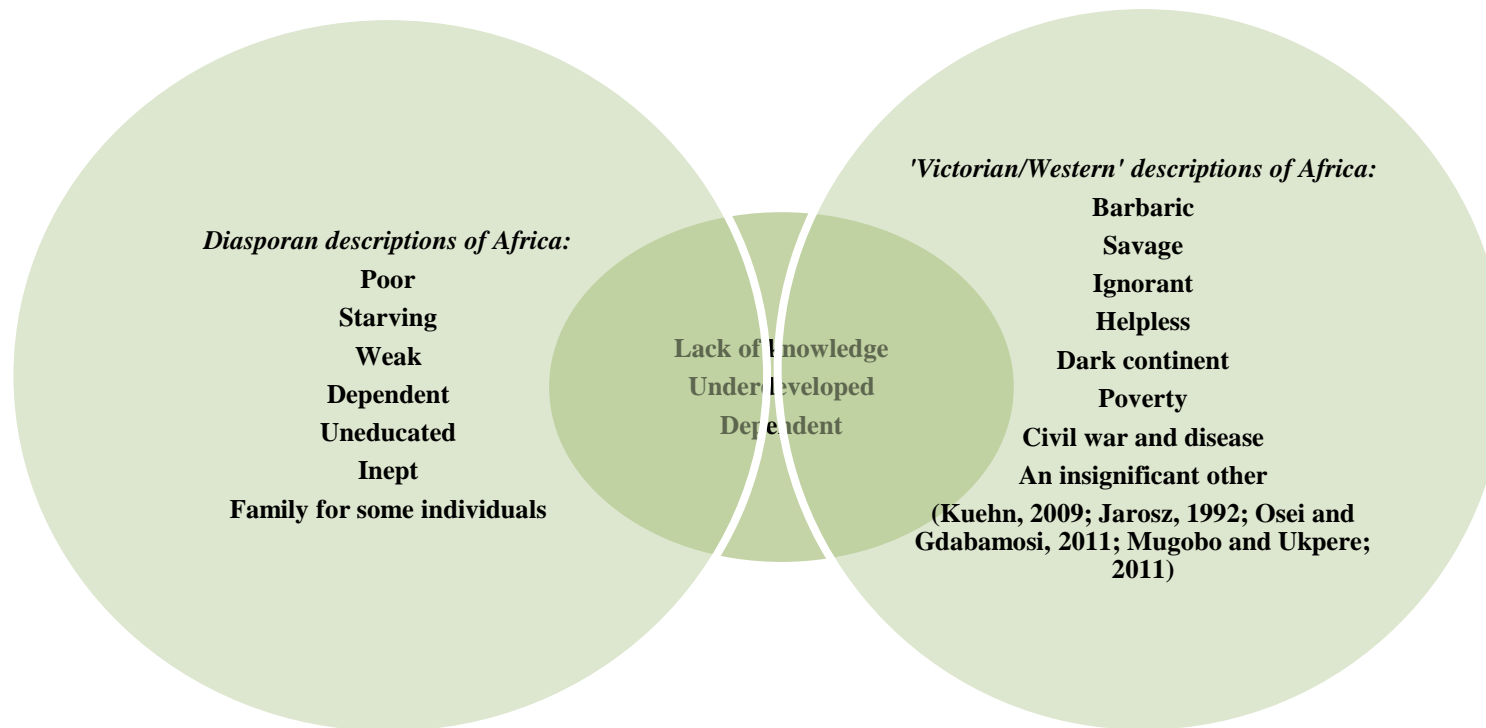


Figure 4: Comparisons –Victorian and diasporan descriptions of Africa as descriptions of the people

“It's crystal clear that when in 2050 1.8 BILLIONS of Africans are citizens of a world super power, it will have a heavy influence on the situation of AAs... Black Caribbeans, Black Latino Americans who are still marginalized in Brazil and last but non the least Afro Europeans whose number is constantly increasing. Figures and economic wealth have some consequences on the status of individuals” (Expert88, Male, Historian, France).

From a Weberian perspective, economic ascension entails the acquisition of higher status by a given collective particularly in capitalist societies (cf. Ritzi-Messner et al., 2010). Therefore, Expert88 (Male, Historian, France) presumes that Africa's progress potentially allows the marginalised African diaspora in Europe and the Americas to be accorded social honour. The same expert further invokes Marcus Garvey to emphasise a possible connection between Africa's rise and its potential social value to the African diaspora as follows:

“Garvey a century ago was much wiser and had the feeling that indeed the rise of Africa will be the rise of all black people world-wide. And this is what we see at a slow pace for sure” (Expert88, Male, Historian, France).

Garvey conceived of Africa's accomplishments as *“compell[ing] the respect of mankind”* (Garvey, 2009, p.13) and *“a splendid demonstration of the worth of the Negro”* (Garvey, 2009, p.49). However, Garvey, remarkably advocated what he

understood as the redemption of Africa by “*Western Negroes*”, whom he urged to “*colonise*” the continent for their and Africa’s sake (Garvey, 2009).

6.2.2. ‘Social reality’: African diaspora and relating to the continent

Our analysis further shows that the interpretations affixed to Africa potentially affect the way the African diaspora relates to the continent. The experiences are coded by the members of the African diaspora into simplified ideas that become ‘true’ and ‘valid’ representations of what the whole continent is, as they believe (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966). To utilise some of the marketing scholarly thought: “*simplistic judgements*” are made based on “*complex information*”, as a social group seeks to “*transform plurality into order*” (Ind, 1997, p.4). In the process, members of the respective social group draw on whatever information is available to them to construct ideas that make sense to them, whatever their validity may be to another observer (ibid.) Hence the ideas on what Africans are/do, and therefore what Africa is/does are established as the social reality by and for the African diaspora studied in this work and possibly beyond (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The ‘perceived’ reality is based on the diaspora’s knowledge of Africans, which derives from the group’s direct and indirect experiences with the continent. The notions become representations of what ‘everybody’ knows within each community (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) about Africa or Africans.

Furthermore, the ideas are passed on to other interested parties as the discourses are enacted within a public domain. The representations are also open to both the public and potentially future generations of diasporan members. While the objective status acquired by the perceptions across the African diaspora online may only be valid to the group in question and subjective to a different group (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Hacking, 1999; Searle, 1995), they prompt diasporan individuals to relate to the continent in ways that both reinforce the notions (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Hacking, 1999; Schutz, 1967; Searle, 1995). The act of what may be conceived of as “the ‘thing-fication’ (*Verdinglichung*): the attribution of ‘facticity’, concreteness... [and] ... objectivity” (Thomason 1982, p. 89) to what Africa is and does, potentially impacts upon the forms of relationships that emerge between the African diaspora and the continent. Potential relationships are revealed through sentiments such as those showing concern and a sense of responsibility for Africans. For instance, Alex expresses that:

“I am from the diaspora Brooklyn to be exact. I see the condition of our people on the continent and the diaspora and it lets me know that brothers like me and you got a lot of work to do. I have read the bickering back and forth and it is disheartening” (Alex, Male, AFD2, USA).

Alex’s (Male, AFD2, USA) statement above resembles an appeal for solidarity and collective action among the diaspora. He considers what he apparently classifies as trivial arguments as causing a loss of diasporan confidence and determination in facilitating the betterment of “*our people*”. Alex (Male, AFD2, USA) suggests that

such conflict and negativity should cease. At the same time, the idea of “*our people*” claims family ties to Africans, and therefore a sense of belonging together. There is the sense that diaspora’s “*heritage*” implies that the individuals “*are Africans themselves*” (Diana Female, AFD2, USA), who share the responsibility of assisting Africans to eliminate poverty. Neil makes this assumption visible as follows:

“I’ve travelled to over 40 different countries, and I’m able to come to the conclusion that the future of Africa must be decided by us... nobody loves Africa more than Africans, and that’s important moving forward”
(Neil, Male, USA, AFD1 and AFD2).

There are three interconnected concepts that we draw out of Neil’s (Male, USA, AFD1 and AFD2) articulation above, namely loving Africa, a sense of responsibility that emerges from self-identifying as African and potentially developing the place, and envisioning these two dimensions as a basis for action. Drawing on his travelling experience, Neil concludes that Africa’s future lies in the hands of individuals like himself who identify themselves as Africans. He hints at the presence of an emotional bond between himself and Africa by alluding to the notion of ‘love’. Loving Africa appears to stimulate the desire to help the continent to achieve a renaissance. However, love is a multi-layered construct that entails intimacy with the object of ‘love’, showing passion and making a decision/commitment with regards to the object in question (Sternberg, 1997). Parenti (2003) notes that loving a place is an abstract and complex idea. In his critique of what it means to love America, the scholar argues that there may be a range of ideologies and ideas upon which the love is predicated (ibid.). For instance outsiders may “*love Africa for its resources*”

(Paul, Male, AFD1, USA), suggesting that their emotion has no strong connection to the people across the continent. Parenti (2003) also maintains that despite limited knowledge of, and exposure to a place's inherent geographical, historical and socio-cultural facets, loving a country can be an emotional connection to the people (ibid.). Most of the diasporan members informing this analysis show an appreciation of Africa that can be described along the concept of 'ideal home', as a place where an individual believes (s)he 'truly' belongs (Safran, 1991). This tendency reflects a potentially deep emotional bond between the diaspora and Africa as an individual's family base. It is then the imagined sense of belonging to a larger collective, which prompts and obliges people to take action in support of their continent (cf. Anderson, 1991).

Moreover, there is a call among the diaspora to promote integration between them and Africa. Particularly, those diasporan members who appreciate their African heritage tend to regard diasporan unification with Africans as their burden. Once again, Alex (Male, AFD2, USA) provides the most comprehensive summary of the shared sentiments as follows.

"Nancy, in an earlier post you made reference about coming to Africa for unification between us to really take effect. I agree. When you can, try [to] post an expanded idea of how and what these meetings should entail. I would like to do a similar thing here in America with it ultimately leading to some form of meeting on the continent for future efforts... I will be able to go the continent in April next year and [I would] be ecstatic to have brothers come with me to discuss an agenda

even if it was no more than staying in contact with our brothers and sisters. If we could expand this to include diaspora Africans from Europe, the Caribbean, Latin and South America we could make an immediate impact” (Alex, Male, AFD2, USA).

Alex (Male, AFD2, USA) makes several interesting points while responding to Nancy’s (Female, AFD2, USA) recommendation to “*facilitate cultural encounters*” across Africa as one way of promoting cohesion. Overall, Alex views social interaction between Africans and the diaspora as a concrete way of promoting unity between the two social groups, who from his standpoint, belong together. In seeking to strengthen ties with Africans, Alex (Male, AFD2, USA) appreciates simply “*staying in touch*” with the “*brothers and sisters*”. He goes on to remark that such social interaction, through meetings, needs both substantial planning and replication across the World for it to foster unity between Africa and its diaspora. The practicality and impact of intentions displayed by Alex and Nancy, among other diasporan members, may be questionable. Yet their viewpoints suggest a desire to concretise relationships between themselves and Africans. However, such sentiments are not prevalent across the African diaspora online. Some of the individuals, particularly among those who identify themselves as African Americans may engage in debates on Africa, yet dissociate themselves from the place. One of the diasporan members makes this assumption explicit as follows

“I would never in my life claim anyone or anything in Africa. I’m not African but I am black. My ancestors were from there centuries ago. And

I'm mixed. I hate Africans [and] Jamaican who are in the America"

(Jeremy, Male, AFD2, USA).

Jeremy (Male, AFD2, USA) rejects any imaginable connection to Africa. Attempting to draw a distinction between "*African*" and "*black*" he underlines that he is black by slavery ancestry, but skin pigment cannot by default, qualify an individual as "*African*". Rather, the actions and behaviours that an individual assumes provide a basis for a collective identity such as 'African' (cf. Tajfel, 1981). His claims are insightful in that they suggest Africa to be a construct linked to the (rather controversial) concept of black (e.g. "*black people... black Caribbeans... black Latino Americans*" (Expert88, Male, Historian, France). In less technical terms, 'black' can be defined as representing a "*human group having dark-coloured skin of African... ancestry*" (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2014). The 'black' people are predominantly in Sub-Saharan Africa, from where the majority of diasporan ancestors were acquired as slaves (cf. Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2014). Hence the diasporan understanding of what Africa is appears to relate to Sub-Saharan Africa. The prominently featured category of black also implies that potential relationships between the diaspora and Africa are likely to be between the individuals and Sub Saharan Africa. We notice that Jeremy (Male, AFD2, USA) also exposes his "*hate*" for other diasporan members as cited further above (this suggests that there prevails potential social tensions among people of African descent). In response to sentiments such as articulated by Jeremy (Male, AFD2, USA), another diasporan member explains that:

“Here [is] the problem... you have the media (AFRICA's news, famine poverty, Aids, wars, diseases, etc.) that give a bad picture of AFRICA...when the great majority of [African Americans] look at these media [reports], they feel ashamed about the so called motherland, they think [to] themselves: I will never go there, that's a waste of time and I could die there, they are dirty, hungry, ugly; I don't want to meet these subhuman that we call our cousins”(Paul, Male, AFD1, USA).

Paul (Male, AFD1, USA) suggests that the negative way Africa is often portrayed by the media has led to shame and avoidance among some African diasporan members. The Africans that Jeremy appears to meet in USA are manifestations of Africa that signify a filthy, starved, and unattractive people. Evidently, Jeremy does not want to be associated with such people or their native habitat. Interpreted along Lewis' (1995) theory on shame, the Africa that Jeremy sees is a failed entity, and himself and other individuals who share the same 'emotions' as his, feel shame not because they have failed themselves (presumably), but they are potentially associated with someone who has failed. To individuals like Jeremy, Africa's exposure is in part a revelation of certain features of the 'black' people. The tendency to dissociate oneself from Africa can be therefore be seen as motivated by the need to avoid stigmatisation, among other possible explanations such as anger that arises from his knowing that he is linked to a failed Africa (cf. Lewis, 1995).

With the above stated observations employed to support our emergent theory there are two key points worth underlining with regards to the parameters of our analysis (our emergent theory is that Africa is the people, and the meaning Africa holds for

an individual shapes his/her interaction with Africans). Firstly, we reiterate that assessing the accuracy or universality of the ideas that signify *Africa/Africans* lies beyond our research objective. Rather, the academic quest of our explorative analysis is to uncover the structure of the construct Africa (cf. Hackley, 1998) from the viewpoint of the African diasporan members online; as their social reality and ground for the type of interactions that unfold between the members and Africa (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Hacking, 1999; Schutz, 1967); and link any discovery to Africa's sustainable development. Secondly, in paying attention to what is said, and the choice of words that are deployed as descriptive of Africans/Africa, this analysis appreciates the constructive role of language (cf. Foucault, 2002) – by that we mean the capacity of language to construct meaning (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Our evaluation as presented here is cemented on the Foucauldian premise that the meaning of any object (Africa, in this case) is conveyed by, and through all discourses that name, describe and evaluate it, mapping its progress, marking its linkages to other entities, and potentially giving the object its own speech “*by articulating, in its name*”, discourses that are regarded as its own (Foucault, 2002, p.35). The African diaspora's language is therefore treated in this work as the most accessible and effective tool for crystallising individuals' beliefs and possible relationships with the continent (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

6.3. Brand Africa: Linkage to corporate branding

As argued at the beginning of this chapter, *Africa* is the African people (and vice versa), in the same sense that “organisations are collections of people” (Ind, 2007, p.41). Organisations may vary in scope and degree of complexity, ranging from universities like Warwick to global complexes such as the World Bank and the

United Nations, inter alia. However all these entities carry a palette of meanings for, and are imbued with contesting interpretations by, diverse social groups and individuals across the world. Given that brands are meanings attached to entities for specific purposes linked to value generation, the World Bank, United Nations, and University of Warwick are brands in their own right, as long established by marketing scholars. Our analysis situates the continent of Africa in the same set of meaningful complexes. In the preceding section of our analysis, we identified a lack of delineation between the people and the place, leading us to conclude that Africa is the people, and *brand Africa* represents a people centric concept.

Within our literature review section we adopted the definition of a brand as ‘clusters of meaning’ (Batey, 2008) attributed to entities such as people, places, ideas and things (Stern, 2006), in order to serve particular socio-economic goals.’ The results of our analysis are conceptually close to the utilised interpretation. Interestingly, however it is ‘things’ that ‘the people’ do as evaluated by outsiders that define the people, with that definition assuming a double function. The interpretation relates to the people, and the people are simultaneously alluded to by the diaspora as Africa. We assert therefore, that people are the primary source of the meaning of Africa, and the conceptualisation of *brand Africa*. We tentatively conclude that in general, collective actions enacted by place inhabitants over a long period of time lie at the heart of an emergent supranational place brand, as perceived by outsiders (collective actions signify specific features about the people, which make the place meaningful to outsiders). However, without ‘the people’ there would be no collective actions (‘things’), and in this context specifically, there would be no *brand Africa* as we have conceptually discovered it to be within this study.

We also note that distinctions can be drawn between the actions undertaken by leaders and ordinary people. The actions of leaders may even be more central to how the place is seen by outsiders. The same trend can be observed within the context of corporate brands. Within this marketing area, leaders and their behaviours may become an intrinsic element of the brand, especially when the leaders are also the founders of the organisation in question (e.g. Sir Richard Branson for the Virgin brand, or Mark Zuckerberg for the Facebook brand). Such corporate brands are often defined on the basis of what their leaders do, and therefore are strongly connected to their founders' personalities. In some cases though, the leaders may be invisible to the general public, for instance not many customers would know who the CEOs of the British Airways or Singapore Airlines are. However, the practice of interpreting Africa (entirely) along its leadership personalities or behaviours is not adequately mirrored in diasporan discussions of the continent (nonetheless, it may be worthwhile to mention that African politicians tend to be featured in a rather negative manner, as our analysis will disclose in due course). Rather interestingly, we get the strong sense that ordinary citizens are at the core of the definition of *brand Africa*, given that they are the ones vulnerable to starvation and lack of knowledge.

Supported by our research findings, we tentatively conclude that a supranational place brand such as *Africa* is a people centric concept, without a clear demarcation between leaders and ordinary people's actions (even if scientific reasoning would persuade us to assert otherwise). More importantly we contend that there is a close conceptual resemblance between *brand Africa* and a corporate service brand such as British Airways or any random bank for instance. By illuminating these theoretical

parameters, our discovery and analysis marks the genesis of an explanation on how far the corporate branding paradigm can be utilised within the context of a meta region such as a continent. Drawing on our findings, we maintain that our results suggest that a supranational place brand such as Africa falls within the theoretical framework for corporate service brands. Members of an organisation of which market offerings are predominantly services, have a pivotal role in shaping the meaning of the corporate brand to outsiders. In particular, the behaviours of employees (and CEOs, if they are visible to the public) serve as the most visible manifestation of the corporate brand. The behaviours are also perceived as sources of brand competitiveness for most corporate service brands. We apply the same reasoning to *brand Africa*, leading us to produce the conjecture that collective actions equally determine the attractiveness (or competitiveness) of a supranational place brand as evaluated by outsiders. In contrast to current research on place branding as reviewed much earlier on, our emergent theory is more specific in its delineation of the corporate product and corporate service brand (e.g. Unilever and Singapore Airlines respectively) as it applies to a construct such as *brand Africa*.

Our results may have shown a lack of conceptual demarcation between the place and the people in the construction of the meaning of Africa. However, we are knowledgeable that from a diasporan perspective Africa alludes to the people showing certain qualities due to collective undertakings or lack of thereof. Simultaneously, Africa is a name for a landmass with specific forms of fauna and flora. African nature signifies something to outsiders (and Africans on the ground). By way of logic, the conceptualisation of *brand Africa* at a more complex level potentially assimilates the geographic elements of the continent as well. In view of

this possibility, we presume that the people dimension can be categorised as a subset of a more intricate and comprehensive meaning of a supranational entity such as *brand Africa*. However, our field evidence shows the associations linked to the people to be rather hegemonic in the formation of *brand Africa*. This compels us to anchor our definition of *brand Africa* on notions about the people, regardless of the perceived geographical richness of the continent.

Brands carry contesting meanings for diverse brand interest groups, with the meanings potentially varying according to context. We claim that *brand Africa* is primarily of interest to the diasporan individuals in question within the context of Africa's self-sufficiency (or development) – *brand Africa* can also mean Safari to a tourist or any random individual on the street. Envisioned from the diasporan angle, *brand Africa* resembles a poor, starving and dependent entity. These dimensions can be subsumed under the concepts of underdevelopment and dependency. However, Africa is a diverse continent with some regions like the North economically faring better than the Sub-Saharan region. Given the historical context of the African diaspora, and constant use of the concept 'black', *brand Africa* may be a representation of Sub-Saharan Africa (defined from the diasporan viewpoint).

While the generalisations established by the diaspora, and also by the mainstream media do not often always discriminate between the North and South or any other continental regions; the most visible problematic elements brought to the fore seem to relate to Sub Saharan Africa. This implies that some of the dimensions linked to the relatively more socio-economically progressed Northern Africa are suppressed. We claim therefore, that akin to corporate (service) brands or any other brand in

general, *brand Africa* is typified by controversies, paradoxes and conflicts. Arguably, such tensions are linked to the brand's competitiveness or lack of it. The most paradoxical or controversial ideas about a brand tend to be the source of the brand's core value for its target customers, if well managed. This observation is particularly visible in political parties, which are brands themselves (French and Smith, 2010).

At the core of that competitiveness are people and their behaviours (Ind, 2007). Organisations behave, hence marketers allude to corporate brand behaviour (Brexendorf and Kernstock, 2007). Corporate service brands behave in certain ways within the context of value creation (Dall'Olmo-Riley and de Chernatony, 2000). While every brand generates value (or should produce value for its stakeholders), every corporate service brand has its unique way(s) of behaving (Schultz et al., 2000) even those that may emulate market leaders. Equally, place inhabitants collectively act in certain ways, and their actions are weighed to establish their effectiveness in solving (or creating) development problems for the people in question. It can be argued, albeit tentatively, that place brands can be imagined as showing particular behavioural tendencies, which relate to the people in question. The actions undertaken by people in a place should also generate value internally for the people themselves, as reflected by achieving self-sustenance. Value generation has an internal orientation in the case of a place brand. This is however contrary to the case of most corporate brand where the generation of value is primarily oriented towards external members of a brand interest group (e.g. customers and shareholders, except where the corporation is a cooperative).

Remarkably, the so much contested Western/Victorian depictions of Africa appear to be equally representations of the African people and vice versa, regardless of their motives and whether they are correct or biased from an observer's standpoint. A few conceptual overlaps between the 'Victorian/Western' and African diasporan descriptions of the continent (or mainly Sub Sahara Africa) are established in this work (underdevelopment and dependency). Evidently, these are some elements of the 'Victorian/Western' image of Africa that have apparently endured the passage of time and generations. Notably, the diasporan understanding of Africa as documented within this research does not appear to be an objection or attempt to displace the 'Victorian/Western' view. Instead, by focusing on the concepts of underdevelopment and dependency, the diasporan perspective reinforces marketers' conception of brands as carrying essence (cf. Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2008).

The paradigm of social construction may object to the 'universality/the absolute truth' of interpretations attached to a social phenomenon (Hacking, 1999) – the paradigm is increasingly instrumental to our understanding of branding and marketing in general (e.g. Hackley 1998 and 2010). Nonetheless *brand Africa* can be conceived of as having an essence or DNA, which reflects distinctive elements that are perceived in a similar pattern across social groups and time. Underdevelopment and dependency seem to be the essence of *brand Africa*. The issues of underdevelopment and dependency are not only featured prominently in both diasporan and 'Victorian/Western' descriptions of Africa, but also highlighted by global institutions such as UNCTAD (2012), UNDP (2013a) and WEC (2013). Albeit, the significance of that 'brand essence' may be variable across and within brand interest groups. While some of the Victorians arguably saw Africa as a dark

continent and the 'insignificant other', several diasporan individuals appear to regard Africa as home (in the sense of family). The same group of diasporan individuals may consider underdevelopment and dependency to be a challenge for them to personally take the responsibility of contributing to Africa's transformation. For some diasporan members though, the two dimensions of the 'brand essence' may be a source of shame. Still, others may utilise the attributes to generate value for themselves (e.g. Charity organisations).

Our analysis also shows that the constructed amalgam of ideas about the people and their collective actions are also employed to define how an individual (e.g. diasporan) relates to the place Africa. *Brand Africa* is therefore a potential source of value for the diaspora (and also for the Africans' themselves, since value creation is regarded within this context as oriented internally more than externally). The value of *brand Africa* to the African diaspora is partly connected to the notion of home and belonging. For a diasporan community, (supranational) place brands are a manifestation of the idea of a historical home, as a place where an individual has family ties of varying degrees of strength. In that way, place brands contribute to individuals' sense of identity in differing magnitudes. This argument is also inline with the general thinking on places and identity as documented by Tuan (1977) for instance. Argued from the perspective mentioned right above, a place brand may attain the same symbolic relevance as any other brand which helps an individual to articulate his/her identity and give more meaning to his/her life (cf. Levy, 1959).

To some of the diasporan individuals, an association with Africa is both an identity and status issue (as revealed by our analysis of the implications of Africa's rise for

the diaspora). In this manner, a place brand may – like any other brand – be viewed as adding to (or undermining) an individual's sense of identity as British, Chinese, African or American, *inter alia*. On one pole, some members of the African diaspora claim to 'love' Africa and appear committed to assist in accomplishing a progressing transformation of the continent. On the other pole, other members seem compelled to distance themselves from the continent. This, we argue, illuminates potential consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998), which may emerge between an individual and the place as a result of the meaning that the place holds for the individual in question. We can classify statements such as 'I hate Africa and Africans, or I love Africa' as testimonies of possible consumer-place brand relationships, with the latter being sources of socio-economic value for involved parties.

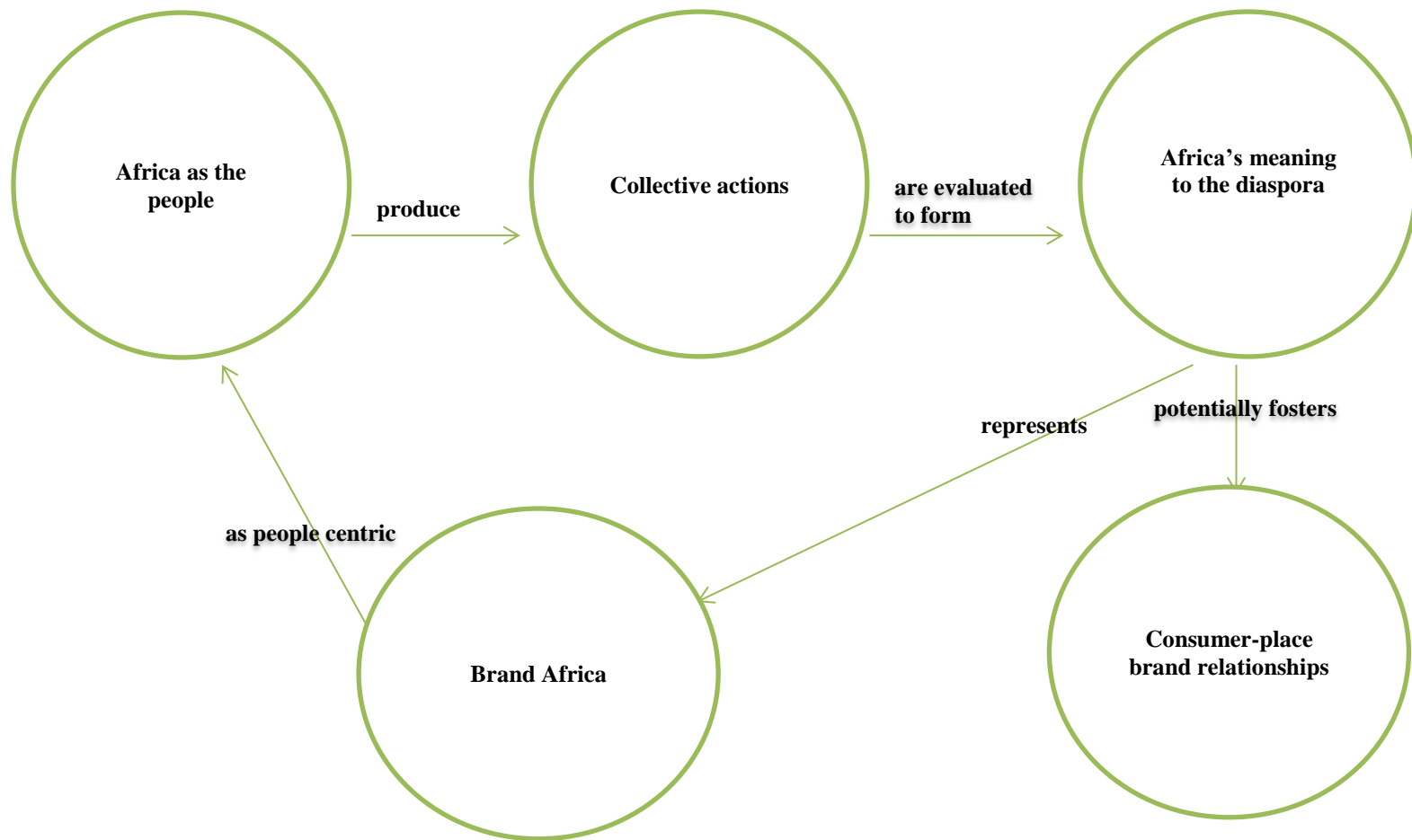


Figure 5: Brand Africa as people centric

6.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter kicked off with the objective to document the formation of a supranational place brand at a continental level, and identify potential connections between corporate branding and supranational place branding in general. Utilising Africa as a case study, the chapter has established that the meaning attributed to a continent by a distinct social group is based on ideas about the inhabitants and their collective actions. Perceived collective actions lie at the core of a mega place meaning. The collective actions that a social group is believed to undertake recurrently over a period of time, endow a place with meaning. Moreover, we established that the diasporan descriptions of Africa do not clearly delineate between Africa as a geographical entity and the people. The chapter has therefore argued that, if Africa is seen as the people, and if people collectively act, then their actions can be conceived of as those of the place. Africa does something, so does America, UK, Brazil or India. The actions realised by each of the entities can be conceived of as place action undertaken by the place as the people.

Our assessment of the research findings has identified a theoretical linkage between a supranational place brand such as *Africa* and a corporate service brand in particular. The contention that supranational place meaning revolves around the people, has translated into the conjecture that a supranational place brand is a people centric concept, as exemplified by *brand Africa*. This signifies a close conceptual resemblance between *brand Africa* and a corporate service brand such as British Airways, where the members affiliated with the organisation and their behavioural practices are viewed as the brand by outsiders. It has been subsequently claimed that our observation and its evaluation mark the threshold of an answer to the underlying

research question on the extent to which the corporate branding paradigm applies to a continent.

Furthermore, some elements of a brand appear to endure, and commonly shared across social groups/perceivers (e.g. poverty, dependent, and uneducated/ignorant). This has been exemplified by the juxtaposition of Victorian descriptions of Africa with the portrayals of the continent by its African diaspora online. Our chapter has consequently claimed that like any other brand, a supranational place brand may have an 'essence' – regardless of the conception of brands as socially constructed and therefore carrying contesting meanings. Referencing extant marketing research, the chapter has also addressed the potential emergence of consumer-place brand relationships. Places are meaningful, and individuals may develop relationships with (supranational) place brands in the same sense that such emotional attachments are fostered between consumers and other brands in general.

7. BRAND AFRICA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*“We own the land, but still rely on other's to provide for us.
When will we realize our potential and learn how to prosper
from it. Africa is making everyone rich except for us, the
owners of the land. We benefit the least from our resources.
Where else in the world is that occurring” (Neil, Male, AFD1
and AFD2, USA).*

7.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the contribution of *brand Africa* to sustainable development. Building on the African diasporan assessment of the continent's progress, the chapter establishes that individuals who require or seek sustainable development should locally drive the progress in order to allow it to be effectively continuous. Expanding the premise that *“people make the place”*, our analysis contends that people also make places physically, for example through infrastructural and industrial development. Making the place involves undertaking collective actions that lead to sustainable development (or lack of it). Collective actions are therefore a source of value, and the value of what people do is revealed by their accomplishments. The chapter also demonstrates that leadership is central to sustainable development. Leaders inspire and empower ordinary citizens, and co-ordinate collective actions into input for realising the desired socio-economic transformation. The two processes namely, industrialisation in the agriculture and mining sectors, and international cooperation and are presented as key to Africa's progress.

In situating the analysis within the domain of marketing, the chapter argues that every great (successful) brand has a great leadership behind it. Moreover, value creation is contingent upon the utilisation of competitive resources available to a supranational region. The chapter also argues that creating more value out of Africa's resources potentially boosts the continent's power within global partnerships as observed by marketers elsewhere. While *brand Africa* can be better understood by theoretically juxtaposing it with a corporate service brand, the conceptualisation of its role in sustainable development assimilates the general scholarship on strategic resource management for value creation. The chapter argues that akin to any given corporation, the 'conglomerate' Africa requires a value creation strategy for converting its competitive natural resources to wealth for the inhabitants on a sustainable basis. A summary of the key points is then presented in concluding the chapter.

7.2. The role of people

Our research establishes that the residents of a given habitat are central to the way the place develops. People act collectively (or should act) in pursuit of specific local or global objectives in the place's interest. The attainment of collective objectives depends on collective input. From a diasporan standpoint, people fundamentally influence their progress or lack of it. We postulate on the basis of our evidence that socio-economic disparities between two places are by and large, the results of what people do within a given habitat. This suggests that collectively, 'the people' are seen as having a capacity to master, tame or tackle the challenges of their environment. This assumption gives the natural environment itself (e.g. climate) a rather passive role. For instance, our assumption is revealed in debates on the likely

outcomes of a hypothetical relocation of Africans to Europe, and Europeans to Africa as follows:

“Africa would turn into Europe and Europe would turn into Africa. Literally, Africa would become developed like Europe is since Europeans would be living there and Europe would become third world and poverty stricken because Africans live there... Look at the way Africans in Africa live. Look at the way Europeans in Europe live... If the Europeans moved into Africa, it would become the new Europe as Europeans would turn the [continent] into a prosperous and civilised society with buildings, proper sewage, education, medical centres etc... Africa will become rich because Europeans will build buildings and industrialise the [continent]... Europe will turn into Africa... The buildings will be destroyed and turned into mud huts” (Greg, Male, AFD1, USA).

The key point we infer from Greg’s (Male, AFD1, USA) somewhat controversial articulation is that living entails doing, and what a social group collectively does has value. The value of collective actions is mirrored by their results. Greg portrays this, as cited above, by predicting a reversal of the developmental levels of the two places, and attributes such change to the perceived distinct ways of ‘living’ between Africans and Europeans. Living entails a series of processes, actions and episodes that form a gestalt, that is, life. Greg’s rather controversial view depicts the African way of life as somewhat hindering progress. Instead of creating value in the form of sustaining and possibly improving the current infrastructure, Africans would be anticipated to turn the current Europe into a “third world” and “poverty stricken”

place (Greg, Male, AFD1, USA). In contrast, the European way of life, which by inference involves value creation, would lead to the progressive transformation of Africa. The Europeans would construct infrastructure and industries across Africa. Notably, such sentiments can be dismissed as naïve or controversial, especially when reflected on within the feasibility of such relocation as imagined here. Yet the sentiments are a powerful projection of the diasporan assessment of the current role played by Africans (or Europeans) in sustainable development (if we understand this construct along the general definition offered by WCED in 1987).

It can be argued that collective actions are a source of value. Both the value generation capacity of, and the value created by collective actions is concretised by the socio-economic course take by a given place. The same inference can be draw out of numerous instances across online communities. To further illustrate, Steve (Male, AFD1, USA) believes that:

“Africa would become a superpower, the U.S. and many European countries would be invaded by foreign countries” (Steve, Male, AFD1, USA).

Steve (Male, AFD1, USA) reinforces the notion of reversed transformation by representing Africans and Europeans/Americans as two opposites based on their perceived strengths or weaknesses. The concept “*superpower*” signifies immense military and political influence at a global level, whereas invasion indicates weakness and vulnerability. Steve portrays (the current) Africa as an incapable actor who cannot protect her/himself or her/his territory. Regardless of whether we choose

to classify such observations as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, they are valuable in that they specify the perceived ‘legitimate’ reasons for the anticipated change. Apart from that, Africa has a history of being politically vulnerable to outsiders (e.g. colonisation), and lately, prone to more economic exploitation by external actors. A good example to support this point is the issue of Africa’s natural resources being plundered by multinational companies and other international investors across the continent (Africa Progress Panel [The], 2014). Arguably, neither Europe nor USA would allow such exploitation. Therefore, the ‘incidents’ concretised by Steve’s account as cited above, do not merely expose the perceived distinctions between Africans’ and Europeans/Americans’ forms of collective socio-economic actions and their impact upon progress. Rather, such narratives also give a form of permanence to the actions, in that the undertakings are viewed as transferable from one habitat to another (e.g. from Africa to Europe), despite potential geographical constraints. This is further exemplified by another comment relating to the physical environment as follows:

“...Africa would lose its natural beauty due to mining, the wild life would be displaced, some [would] be extinct, e.g. there would be mining in Lake Natron to extract soda ash. Instead of leaving the flamingo to live in their natural breeding habitat, the surviving animals would have [to] be kept in a zoo. The world would have been ugly filled by polluted cities...” (Tan, Female, AFDI, USA).

These observations expose the structure of Europeans/Americans act of industrialisation as understood by some members of the African diaspora. In

diasporan eyes, Europeans/Americans' interaction with the environment appears destructive: It drives wildlife away and leads to the locking up of some animals in zoos. It also damages fauna and flora, and thereby undermines the natural beauty of the environment. Thus hypothetically, if Europeans/Americans migrate to Africa they would be equally expected to resume their traditional pattern of interacting with the environment in their pursuit of development. On the other hand, Africans are believed to be able to sustain their environment at least better than their Western counterparts. Interestingly, while Greg (Male, AFD1, USA) believes that Africans will destroy buildings (infrastructure), Tan (Female, AFD1, USA) appears to promote the notion of Americans/Europeans as environmentally destructive.

We contend that Schneider's (1987) premise that "*the people make the place*", operates on two levels of abstraction within the sphere of our research. As argued previously, people "*make the place*" metaphorically through the enactment of collective actions that are classified as representations of what a place is by external observers. Literally "*people [also] make the place*" (cf. Schneider, 1987) physically through the projects and initiatives that they undertake within their habitat. Farms, factories, industries, development policies, investments, infrastructure, environmental sustenance and related policies, institutions, as well as social equity and affiliated policies are all made and maintained by human beings. These outcomes, contexts and conditions do not exist independent of human beings' actions. Instead, they are a combination of tangible and intangible entities that form part of the social structure. They emerge and become effective through people's collective input (human agency), even the economy itself despite traditional assumptions pertaining to 'the invisible hand' (von Mises, 1996). Indeed, human

action is an agency that brings about change (ibid.). Therefore, it can be argued that people have the capacity to collectively transform their lives sustainably, implying that collective actions are a source of value.

7.3. The contribution of Africans

It is clear in the opinion of some African diasporan members online and experts that solutions to Africa's underdevelopment should originate from within the continent. There are however notable differences between the African diasporan and practitioners' conception of Africa's 'sustainable' development. The diasporan members often focus their discussion on the need to tackle starvation across the continent. From their perspective getting rid of famine is the most urgent, basic need to be fulfilled. For example, in responding to an interview question on what they consider to be sustainable development within the context of Africa, Carl explains that:

“Food security is the main thing. Without that, you have mostly nothing. Even if people are poor, if they have food, that would put me more at ease” (Carl, Male, AFD1, USA).

Carl (Male, AFD1, USA) does not seem to be seeking a complete solution for eradicating 'poverty' across Africa. Rather, he gives priority to the riddance of famine. He also reveals that the lack of sufficient food is a personal concern to him (evidently, as in him not being at ease currently). In line with Carl, another member goes on to express his perception of the sustainable development priorities as follows:

“We're not talking about exporting damn cotton...we're talking about distributing food within the continent first. You have to tackle food/health before worrying about exporting products... they aren't eating well in a lot of countries... It damn sure don't look like the food sources are plentiful... sorry... and I hate to show that child like that but well, it's a reality” (Josh Male, AFD2, USA).

Apparently, Josh (Male, AFD2, USA) regards Africa's participation in international markets to be secondary to internal food and health security. Notwithstanding, this viewpoint should not be confused with an assumption that Africa does not need to engage in international trade, as every place requires access to, and participation in international markets to facilitate growth and technology diffusion. By inference, Josh rather argues that the continent must firstly invest capacity *“into the service of hunger-satisfaction”* (cf. Maslow, 1943, p.373). Josh (Male, AFD2, USA) goes on to provide a visual image of a starving child to emphasise that an adequate supply of food and health is a basic need that Africans have to address. He confesses his sympathies for the child, simultaneously describing the situation as the *“reality”* which, apparently must be changed. The diasporan members appear to take a hierarchical approach to the satisfaction of sustainable development needs within the context of Africa. Their opinions (Josh and Carl's, as cited above) imply that the satisfaction of physiological needs (hunger) and safety needs (health) (cf. Maslow, 1943) is central to the notion of sustainable development as it relates to Africa. Interestingly, the majority of diasporan members implicitly engage with basic needs, while experts tend to articulate a much broader interpretation of sustainable

development. They link their definitions to the official exposition offered by WCED (1987), as already reviewed in the third chapter of this work.¹¹ Also, the experts tend to vary in their understanding of Africa's sustainable development priorities. To exemplify, one of the practitioners' states that:

"I think the priority areas there are many, there are many areas and of course most of these areas are interrelated" (Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution).

While Expert11's (Male, International Financial Institution) observation may lack specificity with regards to what the exact priorities are, it is crucial in the sense that it shows the complexity of the issue. We recall (from our literature review) that economic growth, environmental sustenance and more equitable distribution of resources should be considered as one 'objective'. Yet these three dimensions cannot be simultaneously addressed without trade-offs amongst them. Nonetheless, a second expert claims that the priorities will be *"defined through the circumstances and the events in the African continent"* for instance during peacetime, focus could be on *"education for all"* Africans (Expert44, Female, International Development Institution). Periods marked by social conflicts will require regaining internal stability. The expert implies that sustainable development priorities cannot be set as long-term initiatives. Rather, they have to be constantly modified to address the most

¹¹For instance, one of the experts remarks that, "when people talk about sustainable development they are looking at three things: 1) Economic growth, 2) Social development and then 3) Environmental sustainability. So you have to look at these three pillars if you want to really address the issues of sustainable development" (Expert01, Male, International Development Institution).

acute developmental challenges. This assumption reflects a rather temporal approach to the issue of sustainable development, although the process should have long-term orientation. In contrast, another expert believes that the development of the agricultural sector should be prioritised:

“If you are talking about priority sectors one needs to focus on, then it has to be agriculture. Because the vast majority of our people still live on our land, and vast majority of our economic output still derives from the land” (Expert01, Male, International Development Institution).

Expert01 (Male, International Development Institution) is consistent with the diasporan standpoint on food security. The expert implies that more resources should be commitment to the development of Africa’s agricultural sector to permit sustainable growth. He justifies the priority by underlining that agriculture is a key economic sector predominantly supporting the livelihood of the majority of Africans across the continent – roughly over 60% of Africans, as can be estimated from the World Bank’s (2014a) statistics.

The diaspora and experts may not articulate a common definition of the construct sustainable development, but they share the understanding that solutions to Africa’s problem of underdevelopment should be internally driven. For instance one of the diasporan members expresses that:

“If Africans... can't even put forth the effort to bring Africa to its potential, I mean let's be honest...nobody else will, and the cycle [of poverty] continues” (Sam, Male, AFD1, USA).

We infer from Sam's (Male, AFD1, USA) comment that Africa's development is mainly the responsibility of Africans. Africans should become proactive in implementing the relevant structural transformations that guarantee their prosperity continuously. From Sam's viewpoint, we also extract that outsiders will not initiate the necessary activities, processes and projects that lead to the betterment of Africans' lives over long-term. Collectively Africans who are a social group comprising of *“different people”* (Tim, Male, AFD2, India), entailing *“any person[s], regardless of race or religion, who consider Africa to be their home”* (Zola, Male, China, AFD1) must act towards ending poverty, attaining more social justice, and ensuring environmental sustenance on a long term basis across time and generations. Zola's allusion to 'home' is fundamental to our conceptualisation of the role of the African people in sustainable development. Home signifies belonging as *“the place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household”* (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2014). As their home, *“Africans know and understand Africa... as they live or have lived there, and experience it, or have experienced it”* (Alfie, Male, AFD2, Canada). The essence of Alfie's observation is that, there prevails some intimacy between home and the individuals who belong to it, which results from experiencing and understanding the place. That intimacy should (ideally) empower Africans to come up with ideas and implement projects or activities for tackling the issues in question. This assumption may be an oversimplification of the problem of underdevelopment. Yet the perspective is

crucial in that it attributes the responsibility of transforming Africa to the continent as the people who face and interact with the challenges of poverty on a daily basis.

Mia (Female, AFD2, France) sheds light on the this issue further as follows:

“I don’t know if there is a place anywhere in this world where someone comes and says, tell me your problems and I will solve them for you, [and] I will do that everyday of your life. Even the good Samaritan will eventually give up one day” (Mia, Female, AFD2, France).

Mia (Female, AFD2, France) hints that external development agencies will lack that fuller understanding of the challenges that are experienced by locals. At the same time the agencies’ efforts may not be sustainable. The *“African people know what their needs are, and they understand them better than anyone else”* (Expert77, Female, International Development Institution). Both Mia and the expert suggest that knowledge and experience of development needs are embedded within the African context. These notions draw attention to the significance of locally embedded and experience based knowledge in potentially driving change (in the form of sustainable development). Therefore solutions should be generated from within the same African context, and be supported by the same context in order to allow the continent’s continuous socio-economic progress. The same expert cited above adds that the approach should be *“African solutions for African problems”* (Expert77, Female, International Development Institution), whereby, *“Africans, using their own resources are in a position to run their own programmes in their own way”* (Expert55, Female, International Development Institution). This latter observation proposes that Africans must have the autonomy, as an entity, to decide the ways and

means of attaining their sustainable progress. In simple terms, the presumption is that Africans know what they need, therefore they must decide how to fulfil the needs and have the autonomy to do so. Sentiments such as the one stated immediately above arise from a shared belief that the continent's progress has tended to be controlled by outsiders, in particular the external suppliers of development funds (this theme is discussed more elaborately below under 'international cooperation').

Moreover, an internal orientation resembles an inclusive approach to development as hinted by experts in particular. Development practitioners stress for instance the viewpoint that *"all African citizens have a role to play in ensuring sustainable development"* (Expert66, Male, International Development Institution) as it *"cannot be achieved without including everyone in the process"* (Expert77, Female, International Development Institution). One of the fundamental principles of sustainable development is to ensure the progress of all citizens. Hence sustainable development should be treated as an inclusive process and outcome. The participation of ordinary people is also critical, given that they are the masses most vulnerable to poverty and other effects of underdevelopment (World Economic Forum on Africa [The], 2013). Expert77 (Female, International Development Institution) proceeds to reveal that the dimensions of an inclusive strategy include *"providing socio-economic opportunities to all segments of the population, without excluding women and youth in particular"*. Regardless of the crucial role they play within the agricultural sector in particular, women and youth tend to be marginalised across Africa: *"We still discriminate against women and young people"* (Expert77, Female, International Development Institution). However, Africans cannot progress

sustainably if the majority who do “*most of the work across the continent*” (Expert55, Female, International Development Institution) are denied access to opportunities and resources. Elaborating, another development practitioner states that:

“In terms of sustainability, the women are more entrepreneurial [across] the continent than the men... If you go to the villages... it is the women that go to the farm, it is the women that start businesses that succeed, but because of the way societies are kind of operating within these rural areas you get the men being dominant...We still get quite a lot places [across] the continent...where women are treated as second class citizens...you show me a country where women are treated as second class citizens and they have developed” (Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution).

Expert11 (Male, International Financial Institution) claims that there tends to be lack of equality across Africa given that women are often regarded as “*second class citizens*” despite them being more “*entrepreneurial... than men.*” The apparent exclusion of women experienced across Africa contradicts the MDG 2015 and post 2015 agenda, which embraces gender equality as a means to sustainable development. Gender inequality in Africa manifests as a combination of laws, norms and practices that discriminatorily limits women and girls’ access to resources and opportunities (African Development Bank [The] et al., 2013a). Discriminatory practices can also prohibit women from inheriting and owning property, as well as starting and/or running business ventures (World Economic Forum on Africa [The],

2013). The observations on gender inequality point to an apparent lack of acknowledgement of the long-term impact on progress, of providing resources and opportunities to women. For instance, countries with more gender equity benefit from utilising a fuller pool of their human resources, as demonstrated by places like Iceland and Finland (World Economic Forum [The], 2013). Similar to women, the youth has potential to facilitate the progress of all Africans if capacitated. Another development explains that:

“We have the young people but we can’t build them into workers... [there is] no meaningful engagement with the youth... Development cannot be sustained without more than half of African people’s human resources utilised” (Expert55, Female, International Development Institution).

The failure to tap the youth resource represents a wastage of the human resources that could change Africa. Africa has the world’s youngest population, which is conceived of as an asset with the potential to significantly contribute to the continent’s enduring transformation, if invested in strategically (World Economic Forum on Africa [The], 2013). For example, the youth can:

“...form organizations that would spread information and awareness of national issues and how they can contribute positively in these matters” (Expert66, Male, International Development Institution).

Expert66 (Male, International Development Institution) implies that the youth can be instrumental in educating the public on developmental issues, and the socio-economic activities required to lift Africans out of poverty. According to the World Bank (2011), the African youth constitutes 36.9% of the working population, yet almost 60% of the young people are unemployed. The *“lack of employment among young people may cause low self-esteem and frustration”* (Expert77, Female, International Development Institution), which culminates into *“violence... if they don’t have jobs, and no means to get out of poverty, they become frustrated and fight wars”* (Expert55, Female, International Development Institution). Wars lead to the destruction and wastage of available (human and natural) resources and ultimately more poverty. Hence Africa needs to engage its *“200 million young people between 15 and 24”* (World Economic Forum et al., 2013, p.19) in sustainable development, to allow the process to be locally driven and collectively owned.

The observation that African youth, men and women collectively make the prosperity they seek a ‘reality’ is merited, particularly when assessed against the backdrop of the development of other places. For instance, it is the inhabitants of America (or Americans) who created – among many more other companies including Google, Facebook and Twitter:

“Coca-cola Pepsi, MTV, Levi’s, Wrangler...Marlboro, Budweiser, Jim Beam, Jack Daniel’s, Harley-Davidson... Nike, Reebok...IBM, Compaq, Oracle, Dell, Cisco, Hewlett-Packard, Apple, Intel, Microsoft and Xerox...Wal-Mart, Amazon...Calvin Klein, Donna Karan, Tommy Hilfiger and Ralph Lauren” (Dinnie, 2005, p.406).

As a collective, these several corporate initiatives account for a substantial volume of the USA's progress and the forming of *brand America* (cf. Anholt and Hildreth, 2004). Remarkably, a number of such business initiatives – for instance Apple, Facebook and Disney – were created by ordinary people facilitated by a conducive business environment. Arguably, a proactive approach to the transformation of poor socio-economic circumstances lies at the heart of the development of places like USA and Europe among other prosperous regions (although the equity of their socio-economic growth is disputable in some cases). Indeed, “*the people make the place, and they make things happen*” through proactivity (Farrell and Strauss, 2014). A proactive stance entails the initiation of action to “*bring about a different future*” (Farrell and Strauss, 2014 p.2) and a better one for an individual and his/her collective group (ibid.). Proactivity entails taking initiative as in being active contrary to reacting to the environment, long-term orientation and persistence in the face of challenges (Frese, 2009). Proactivity also involves not just spotting opportunities but also creating ways to accomplish change (ibid.).

Sustainable development has a future orientation and so does a proactive approach to change as stated above. Taking into account the diasporan views, we contend therefore that it is the African people who should become “*active agents of change*” by taking the initiative and challenging “*the status quo*” (cf. Farrell and Strauss, 2014, p.3; also see, Grant and Ashford, 2008; Frese, 2009). The diasporan and expert views stress the necessity for Africans to be at the centre of all socio-economic (and environmental) processes and activities crucial to the continent's sustainable development. It is the African people who face the responsibility of planting and maintaining irrigation systems and forestry to overcome the challenges posed by the

steppes and deserts covering almost half of the continent. The extraction and processing of mineral resources, and the improvement of poor soils in the savannah region through manure and fertilisation, are the responsibility of Africans. Collectively, the Africans are also the ones who control pests and diseases that affect their agricultural produce, as well as the populace across the continent. It is also Africans who face the task of building and maintaining power systems to electrify and fuel the continent and its industries on a long-term basis. However, our analysis also establishes that a proactive approach to sustainable development, and impact of Africans' collective efforts require support from leaders as revealed below.

7.4. The contribution of political leaders

Diasporan discussions pertaining to African leadership reveal that the latter should be the main facilitator of sustainable development. Africans make sustainable development 'happen', but they also need good leaders to direct and influence the process in ways only they can. For instance another diasporan member, Barry (Male, AFD1, USA) succinctly states that, "*if you don't have a great leader you will not rise*". The concept of great leadership alluded to by Barry (as cited above) is fundamental to Africa's transformation. Evidently, 'rising' is a transformative process and outcome, and great leaders are transformers (Bass, 1991) who make great things happen. Such leaders 'make people make the place', for instance by co-ordinating actions and enabling the development of collective input (cf. Bass, 1991). Great leadership is not only inspirational, but also initiative as disclosed by Mia (Female, AFD2, France) in one of her detailed online email interview responses, as follows:

“Leaders take the initiative as individuals or through institutions, to define the route of development in all its flavours... Really, their job is to set the direction and supply the resources for improving their countries, the social standing and well-being of Africans... Unlike us, politicians have access to the essential resources for leading [and] allowing the transition of their country to a better status, to change [or] improve the current situation in Africa, in all aspects really” (Mia, Female, AFD2, France).

Similar to most diasporan individuals online, Mia (Female, AFD2, France) implies that African leadership must be proactive in marking the path of development and administration of the essential resources for achieving socio-economic progress. Initiative leaders *“make choices and take action that leads to change instead of just reacting to events or waiting for things to happen”* (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991, p.51). Mia (Female, AFD2, France) also attaches leadership to the improvement of Africans’ social status within a global context. However, Mia also gives the impression that political leadership is ‘the superhuman’ entity with power over Africans’ socio-economic status (by claiming that leaders determine the course of *“development in all its flavours”* and permit the transformation of Africa *“in all aspects really”*). This assumption seems to surrender the process and attainment of sustainable development to African politicians, thereby somewhat contradicting the conception of the process as a collective effort. In doing so, the presumption appears to take away responsibility from individuals, and encourage them to continue seeing leadership as the only actor who can determine whether their lives become improved or not. Hence this viewpoint may encourage complacency, and the disempowerment

of ordinary Africans, parallel to giving permanence to the status quo (cf. Argyris, 1998). Moreover, if we scrutinise the issue closely, leaders are chosen by the people that they represent (apart from the leaders being an elite group of the people who make the place). In view of this point, the issue becomes arguably that of the political choices made by the African people, and their political roles. This is however not to negate the observation made by the diaspora and experts, that political leadership is a powerful apparatus for achieving sustainable development. It is an *“apical institution [which] sets the mood of how other institutions evolve... just the whole ambience”* (Expert33, Male, International Financial Institution). The essence of this observation is that leadership permeates all spheres of policy-making and implementation for sustainable growth and social improvement. Another development practitioner further clarifies as follows:

“When you look at the government part, it opens the door to many other things. We talk about governance, political governance, economic governance, but those are just subsets or sub attributes of the governance involved... the government has got to play a role in business, the government has to play a role in education, the government has to play a role in foreign direct investment, the government has to play a role not necessarily bringing in money, but creating the environment... In any system, any economy it is critical, without that, there will be no sustainable development” (Expert11, International Financial Institution).

Expert11 uses a powerful idiom ‘opening the doors’ to express that as a collective of political leaders, the government provides people with opportunities to perform the socio-economic actions for transforming their lives sustainably. The system by which African nations are governed should create an environment that is conducive to the realisation of the activities and processes underpinning sustainable development. The environment should support business growth, education and FDI, as some of the ingredients of a more equitable and sustainable socio-economic growth. To recycle Expert44’s (Female, International Development Institution) terminology, the failure of leadership in setting a growth friendly environment makes sustainable development “*hypothetical*”. Good governance lies at the heart of enabling Africa’s renaissance, in the sense that the former can trigger collective action and harness collective resources for the accomplishment of common goals (van Zeijl-Rozema et al., 2008).

Remarkably, the importance of political leadership is made visible by statements that point to what is ‘needed’. Such articulations reveal the missing key leadership qualities that impact upon the capacity of Africans to drive their sustainable progress. For example another development expert comments that:

“We need leadership that understands what sustainable development is [and] is keen to promote and achieve such progress... [Leaders] have to pull together all different elements, therefore, they should be honest and hardworking leaders... They should be leaders who are committed to their development goals... mobilising resources and are people motivating” (Expert55, Female, International Development Institution).

Firstly, by stating that there is a need for a leadership that “*understands... sustainable development*”, Expert55 (Female, International Development Institution) suggests that there is a lack of appreciation of the process and outcome among some African leaders (or the leadership approach displays such knowledge gap). Understanding Africa’s sustainable development signifies a state of having adequate knowledge of the needs to be fulfilled, goals and objectives to be accomplished, and the initiatives to be undertaken – business researchers would denote this as understanding the business in its entirety e.g., Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991). Knowing also entails clarity on the contribution to be made by both leadership and the ordinary people. It is therefore unlikely for leadership to strive towards sustainable development when they lack its full appreciation. However it is not merely a question of understanding such targeted progress, but also of being “*honest*” and “*hard working*” (Expert55, Female, International Development Institution). While honesty signifies “*being truthful and non-deceitful*” (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991, p.53), “*hard working*” reflects a tendency to work with energy and commitment. The concept of leadership commitment is still very critical to the facilitation of Africa’s sustainable and more equitable growth. Making this assumption transparent, another development practitioner substantiates that:

“Leaders need to have vision. Vision of what, where and how they want to lead to what the society desire to be... Then they need to have a strategy for achieving that vision... and they need to be able to carry people along in terms of enacting the strategy that will enable them to accomplish their mission... and then they need to be able to show that

they are examples themselves, lead by example, if I can put it that way”

(Expert99, Male, International Financial Institution).

Expert99 (Male, International Financial Institution) implies that leaders must have a strategic vision. A strategic vision articulates a more attractive future (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991) for Africans as resembled by the betterment of their lives. A strategic vision also outlines a model of how a more attractive future should be collectively realised (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991). To utilise Westley and Mintzberg’s (1989) terminology, visionary leadership “gets” Africans to “*see a way to think and act*” (p.19) in order to shift themselves out of poverty. Apart from being visionary, African leaders should also have a strong wish to achieve such progress, and be role models themselves. Such leadership potentially stimulates ordinary Africans to find ways to secure better life standards for themselves and future generations. The major drawback across Africa however is that “*most politicians are not honest*”¹² (Expert02, Male, Regional Development Institution), signifying that their capacity to inspire and motivate people may be limited. African leadership may therefore tend to lack impact, yet is held as a key group of people required to facilitate Africa’s socio-economic progress.

7.5. Key processes

The diasporan and experts’ opinions reveal that Africans should focus on boosting the industrial capacity of the mining and agricultural sectors, as well as ensuring an

¹²Lack of honesty is discussed in more detailed in connection with issues such as accountability and corruption in the next chapter.

active role in key global development partnerships. These perceived key processes are reviewed subsequently.

7.5.1. Industrialisation

The general consensus between the diaspora and experts is on the need for Africa to shift from a primary product economy to industrialisation particularly within the agricultural and mining sectors. The diaspora is aware of Africa's highly competitive reserves of natural resources as revealed by claims such as, *"Africa beats you hands down for wealth in resources"* (Don, Male, AFD1, UK), or *"Africa has the resources the world needs to function"* (Molly, Female, USA, AFD1). However:

"the major challenge is that these resources are extracted without adding value to them prior to exporting to the Western market"
(Expert66, Male, International Development Institution).

Expert66 (Male, International Development Institution) implies that the failure to process minerals into (semi) manufactured products is a setback to economic growth; because when exported as raw materials, the resources earn less revenue than (semi) processed goods. From the experts' point of view, the main reason why African resources are traded in the international market as raw materials relates to the lack of industrialisation across the continent. One of the experts describes the situation as follows:

"We still got a continent of basically raw products. Kind of you know, we still producing only raw materials, we don't add any value to the things"

that we take out from the continent... When we get coco don't tell me that in 2012 we still cannot get equipment that can process coco and export it. When we dig our diamond, why do we send it abroad for processing, because when we send it broad for processing, we create jobs abroad..."
(Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution).

Expert11 (Male, International Financial Institution) outlines a complex relationship between raw materials, industrialisation and employment creation opportunities. Failure to process natural resources locally in Africa, due to a lack of industrial infrastructure, results in the loss of employment creation opportunities. The expert also appears to regard the deficit in industry infrastructure as a rather unacceptable reality. It is clear from Expert11's (Male, International Financial Institution) comments, that if the natural resources such as diamonds and coco were to be processed in Africa, they would create jobs for the Africans. This suggests that not only are Africans earning relatively less from their natural resources, but also exporting their resources at the expense of local employment. These two factors are both detrimental to a more equitable economic growth. Indeed, the lack of industrialisation and technological know-how has been identified by the AfDB (2011) as a major barrier to Africa's sustainable development. The mining sector in particular would boost the African economy if sufficient investment would be committed to the industry. For example, investment in artisanal mining would create a significant source of income and employment for about eight million Africans, of which the majority live in rural areas and are vulnerable to poverty (APP, 2013).

Moreover, the African diaspora correctly regards agriculture as the backbone of the African economy and crucial for ensuring Africa's food security (as also confirmed by the AfDB 2011; APP 2013; WEF et al., 2013). For example the following account provided by Carl in an online interview is insightful:

“You probably are aware that Africa is largely an agricultural economy, and is the sector where most people of Africa derive their primary means of income. Food security, agricultural development, and economic growth are all intermixed. I believe the key to Africa's prosperity lies in placing focus on agricultural development via technological innovation as well as technical and scientific or "agro-science" education” (Carl, Male, USA, AFD1).

Reinforcing Carl's observations, another development expert goes on to explain that:

“More than 70% of the Sub-Saharan population depends on agriculture for their livelihood and the sector employs the majority of the sub-Saharan population, in Malawi 80% of 14 million... As of now, the majority of the population depends on subsistence farming with very few involved in commercial farming” (Expert66, Male, International Development Institution).

At the same time, Africa has a “growing population that requires to be fed” (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe). The population is projected to double from 1.2 billion to 2.4 billion by 2050 (UNICEF, 2014). The imbalance

between population growth and food production indicates that subsistence farming will not be enough to guarantee food security. However, with 202 million hectares of arable land “*or half the world’s total holdings of useable uncultivated fertile land*” (Byamugisha, 2013 p.xv), Africa has the potential to feed its population. Yet the continent utilises a mere 25% of the total cultivatable area (ibid.). The agricultural sector is under productive due to poor investment in key resources and areas such as “*technological innovation*” and “*agro-science education*” (Carl, Male, USA, AFD1). Africa must for instance invest in boosting the productivity of its local farmers in order to ensure food security over long-term. Tim, another diasporan member reveals this assumption by drawing upon his professional experience as follows:

“In the navy I learned a saying “pull yourself towards yourself” basically fix yourself. If Africa relies on others all the time it will never learn. Another saying Give a man a fish, you feed him for the day. Teach him to fish, feed him for life... A good example is food. Giving food aid accomplishes nothing since now [Africans] will all ways need food aid. Better teach and help the local farmers so they can produce more. This way they can now help [themselves] and even other African countries”
(Tim, Male, India, AFD2).

Tim (Male, India, AFD2) claims that Africans should organise their activities and resources so that they become self-sufficient rather than rely on aid. Tim describes this as “*fix[ing] yourself*”, or “*pulling yourself towards yourself*” particularly within the agricultural sector. Looking at the problem of food insecurity, Tim reveals the

need to invest in developing the knowledge and competencies of farmers in order to build a more innovative, efficient and sustainable farming sector. Tim also holds the belief that initiatives to boost the productivity of the agricultural labour force should be kicked off at national levels. Arguably, if all African national leaders would commit investments in their farmers, they would be adopting an internal collective approach towards tackling food insecurity.

From the diasporan perspective, food aid does not offer itself as a sustainable and adequate solution to Africa's extreme poverty as noted above by Tim (Male, India, AFD2). Aid does not create employment and the necessary incentivising conditions for self-sustenance (Moyo, 2009a). Furthermore, an over-reliance on international donors for so many years has established what appears to be perennial dependency. Millions of Africans face chronic starvation and the continent has been pushed into "*a vicious circle of aid dependency*", leaving it "*with nothing but the "need" for more aid*" (Moyo, 2009b). Instead of solving Africa's poverty, food aid has rather contributed to Africa's food insecurity¹³ (Moyo, 2009a). However, reliance on food aid is also due to natural disasters such as droughts periodically occurring in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular. Notwithstanding, "*a lot of agriculture is manual*" across Africa (Expert55 Female, International Development Institution). As documented by the APP (2014), currently:

¹³Defined as "a situation that exists when people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life. It may be caused by the unavailability of food, insufficient purchasing power, inappropriate distribution or inadequate use of food at the household level...Food insecurity may be chronic, seasonal or transitory" (FAO, 2014).

“Too many African farmers still use methods handed from generation to generation, working their lands or grazing their animals much as their ancestors have done for millennia” (APP, 2014).

The lack of mechanisation forces the majority of Africans to practice subsistence farming, which is however not sustainable. Subsistence farming is small scale, and therefore limited in its food production. This means that Africans are often in a position to produce just enough, if at all, for family consumption in the short-term and can neither stock for future consumption nor spare some surpluses for trading. Moreover, the African farmers who are mainly women and youth *“have suffered from a combination of neglect and disastrously misplaced development strategies”* (APP, 2014, p.15). For instance, in addition to the usage of hoes rather than machinery to increase efficiency and productivity, most African farmers lack fertilizers, irrigations systems and pesticides (ibid.). Therefore, an apparently severe shortage of farming machinery and inputs leads to limited food production, perennial hunger and dependence on external aid. Poor agricultural productivity also means that Africa is faced with a high food import bill. The funds could however be invested elsewhere as described below by Ray:

“Africa imports a huge percentage of its food from western Europe and the USA. If we could save that money and keep it inside Africa, that would solve a major part of the economic problem” (Ray, AFDI, Male, USA).

As observed by the APP (2014), food imports cost Africa about 35 Billion US dollars yearly. This value is more than some of the continent's countries' GDP – for example Zimbabwe with \$12.80 Billion in 2013 (World Bank [The], 2014d). Arguably as Ray notes, and as confirmed by the APP (2014) such funds could be invested in the commercialisation of the agricultural industry across the continent. These observations raise a question on where African leaders put their (sustainable) development priorities. One expert reveals that, *“if you want sustainability you need to begin by engaging with the rural communities”* as these have the potential to also *“feed the urban areas and drive the economies”* (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe). The process of leveraging the productive capacity of the agricultural sector will also require the continent to invest more in the production and processing of locally consumed and traded foodstuffs. Expert22 (Male, University Professor, Europe) further elaborates follows:

“We also need to produce goods that can be consumed and traded domestically. So if you look at most of the products we produce such as coffee, well nobody is going to eat coffee, so that takes valuable, arable land away from foodstuffs that would eventually lead to food insecurity if we are not careful...” (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe).

Expert22 (Male, University Professor, Europe) addresses the imperative to meet the basic food needs. For instance, the expert implies that if citizens live on corn meal as the main ingredient of their staple diet, then investment must be put into large-scale production of maize corn rather than coffee. The same logic applies to a nation whose staple food is rice or potatoes. Such basic food requirements must be met

prior to an expansion into the production of cash crops for export markets. Expert22's (Male, University Professor, Europe) view may be too narrow in that it does not appear to take into account the need to diversify. However the standpoint focuses on the objective to tackle extreme hunger across Africa by utilising the available means and resources. Nkrumah (1963, p.109) similarly underscores the linking of *"agricultural production primarily to the needs of the domestic market"* as well as *"provide raw materials for secondary industries"* across Africa. In his view, the non-alignment between local food production and local needs is attributed to the historical arrangements, which required Africans to produce and supply Western markets (Nkrumah, 1963).

In addition to matching food production to consumption needs, experts identify other measures that should be implemented to boost value generation within the agricultural sector as subsidisation, land reforms and environmental protection. To exemplify this, Expert33 (Male, International Financial Institution) outlines the importance of the first two measures as follows:

"It's very difficult to make progress without some form of subsidy... and secondly it's going to be very difficult to make progress without some agricultural reforms... we just need in my view... to come up with some kind of toolkit of how best to do land reform in Africa in a way that would raise productivity" (Expert33, Male, International Financial Institution).

The development practitioner cited above observes that the lack of both subsidisation and land reforms are a barrier to large-scale and more advanced farming across Africa. International trends (e.g. in USA, Europe and even in the emerging markets such as Brazil and China) show that subsidies can support innovation in crop and animal husbandry. Subsidies can also be invested in the adoption of new farming technologies and practices that increase productivity. Furthermore, subsidies help to keep the cost of food affordable to consumers by cutting the cost of farming. Other than that, we observe that subsidies tend to protect farmers economically from droughts and fluctuating food prices. Thereby subsidisation allows food production to be operated on a more stable and long-term basis. Evidently, subsidies are crucial to the revamping and expanding of the African agricultural sector. However, subsidies can also lead to less competitiveness among farmers internally (and a less equitable market access internationally), suggesting that their implementation may need constant monitoring.

With regards to land reforms, the difficulty referred to above by Expert33 (Male, International Financial Institution) is partly due to the issue of land ownership rights. Firstly, women often lack such rights due to customary laws. The lack of access to land implies that women cannot independently make decisions on the utilisation of land, although they are “*the backbone of Africa’s farming, present and future*” (Byamugisha, 2013, p.xv). Secondly, there is increased foreign investment into arable land acquisition across the continent (Byamugisha, 2013), widely seen by some social actors as ‘land grabbing’. Such investments often displace small holder African farmers and limit their access to land, especially where ownership is ambiguous (Lisk, 2013). Land grabbing poses the threat of increased poverty across

Africa (Byamugisha, 2013) as the investors from mainly from Asian countries tend to produce food on African land for their home and other international markets (Grain, 2012). Thirdly, there are cases where land reform appears to have led to more food issues than before, as exemplified by Zimbabwe in 2000 (New York Times [The], 2012b). Zimbabwe's land reform process transferred land from the commercial white farmers to indigenous mainly small-scale farmers, which led to food shortages (ibid.). The programme *"undermined one of Africa's sturdiest economies as growth contracted and its currency became worthless because of hyperinflation, joblessness and hunger grew"* (New York Times [The], 2012b). These observations highlight the need for African leaders to put in place land ownership Acts and regulations (Byamugisha, 2013), that will ensure a more socially just and sustainable economic development across the continent.

The environmental aspect is not as prominently featured in the diasporan and experts' discussions on sustainable development as other issues identified above. Only a handful of diasporan members and development practitioners appear to consider environment as an issue that Africans should seriously engage with. The few members point out:

"All projects and activities that are implemented for Africa's development must be sensitive to the continent's environment, you know the issue of global warming, ironically affects Africa the most, without the continent causing that much environmental harm to the environment" (Mia, Female, AFD2, France).

Mia's (Female, AFD2, France) perception merely echoes the observations documented by global institutions, and reviewed much earlier within this work. However such line of observation underlines the potential conflict arising between Africa's need to preserve its "*gorgeous landscape*" (Zanda, Male, AFD1, UK), "*stunning scenery*" (Kelly, Female, AFD1, UK) and wildlife, and the prerequisite to set up fully functioning industries as a pathway to a more equitable and sustainable socio-economic progress. For instance, mining will always entail the transformation of the environment, often leading to depletion: "*Extraction depletes the asset that generates the revenue*" (Africa Progress Panel, 2013, p.80). Expert01 (Male, International Development Institution) underlines this by means of an example:

"Well the exploitation of natural resources generally affects the environmental sustainability... For example coal has a very devastating effect on the environment... even with the other types of natural resources, the way they are exploited has a very negative impact on the environment..." (Expert01, Male, International Development Institution).

These challenges imply that Africans "*need to take into consideration all the resources*" they have to ensure that they "*contribute to economic development in such a way that they are not depleted*" (Expert99, Male, International Financial Institution). Therefore, this expert viewpoint suggests that, as part of 'making the place' collectively, the process of industrialisation will require to be implemented in a system where Africans also put effort into the preservation of the continent's natural environment.

7.5.2. *International cooperation*

The African diaspora online (studied in this work) tends to perceive the approach of the World Bank and IMF towards enabling Africa's development as rather hurting African economies on a long-term basis. Most of the diasporan members appear suspicious of the World Bank and IMF policies. The members deem the policies counterproductive, as for instance mirrored by Mas' (Male, USA, AFD1) declaration that, *"the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have never worked for the interests of the African people"* (Mas, Male, USA, AFD1). Mas believes that the operations of the two institutions for enabling Africa's socio-economic growth, have not been designed and intended to achieve that outcome. Another diasporan member, Ray (Male, USA, AFD1) captures the collective sentiment as follows:

"IMF and World Bank are there to exploit and dominate Africa... African countries could not borrow money unless they imposed draconian "austerity measures" that laid off workers, fired government employees, sold publicly owned businesses and enterprises to the [West] for pennies on the dollar" (Ray, Male, USA, AFD1).

Ray (Male, USA, AFD1) presumes that the Bretton Woods Institutions' goal is to benefit from Africa's resources on unfair terms. Similar to most diasporan members online, Ray holds the opinion that the two institutions impose some excessively harsh and severe terms upon African nations as conditions for releasing development funds and expertise. What the diaspora seems to suggest is that Africa is cooperating with harsh, unfair and rather dictatorial development agencies, who are not genuinely interested in the continent's progress. Regardless of how the diaspora

looks at the issue in question, the role of the World Bank and IMF entails facilitating economic growth and stability through offering loans. Funding is provided under conditions that include the implementation of structural adjustment programmes by countries. Such “*structural adjustment programmes, by their very nature, are very painful processes*” (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe) given that they require cutting government expenditure (Ake, 1996). As noted above by Ray (Male, USA, AFD1) the impact of structural adjustment programmes is most felt within the African public sector, which also absorbs a substantial size of the continent’s labour force. Hence, cutting government expenditure often involves reducing the size of the public sector through retrenchments. Notwithstanding, retrenchments have a broader impact on the socio-economic prospects of African countries (or any other country) (Kamoche, 1997), as they lead to loss of employment and sources of income for the ordinary people.

Furthermore, the World Bank and IMF are not charity organisations; “*they have shareholders that they have to report to*” (Expert99, Male, International Financial Institution). Therefore, their policy recommendations are designed taking into account the needs and expectation of shareholders. This signifies that the two institutions operate with a profit orientation. These observations are depicted by another expert’s portrayal of the situation as follows:

“Remember the World Bank is not a country, but it’s an organisation whose resources are actually controlled by the major countries around the World... The World Bank does not give free money, there is nothing

like free lunch... these two institutions are all profit-making institutions”

(Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution).

Expert11 (Male, International Financial Institution) claims that the World Bank and the IMF not only expect a return on their investment, but also, are significantly influenced by the key global economic (and political) actors. This implies that the policies that are portrayed by the diaspora as unfair are to a great extent authorised by the ‘superpowers’ (e.g. USA and UK among others). The latter also qualifies as Africa’s competitors, and may therefore be conceived of as tending to undercut the continent’s growth prospects. If this assumption is linked to the diasporan claims, it would (dangerously) presuppose that the ‘superpowers do not want’ to see the materialisation of Africa’s transformation. However, the strive for a “*strong financial performance*” (World Bank [The], 2014c) prescribes that the two institutions “*have to respond to pressure and interests of their own shareholders*” (Expert99, Male, International Financial Institution). For instance the World Bank (officially operating as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) is accountable to 188 members who all hold a shareholder status (World Bank [The], 2014c). Voting on policies and funding is based on the number of shares owned, whereby the allocation is equivalent to “*one vote for each share of the Bank’s capital stock held by the member*” (World Bank [The], 2014c). Among the shareholders, The United States is the largest investor owning “*16% of the total subscribed capital*”, followed by Japan: 8.94%; Germany: 4.73%, and; France and the United Kingdom at par: 4.22% (World Bank [The], 2014c).

The absence of African countries from the top five World Bank shareholders indicates that the countries contribute very limited resources to the institution. The power of each shareholder is correlated to the amount of resources contributed by each member. Hence, Africans appear to have a low bargaining power (cf. Porter, 1990) regarding the choice of policies and volume of funds they can access from international institutions as a collective or individual nations. Overall, the continent seems to have a peripheral role within the context of international cooperation. Arguably, this sabotages Africans' capacity to principally define the course of growth as 'desired' by the diaspora and development experts.

Until recently when China and India started acting as alternative sources of development funds for Africa, the continent relied on the Bretton Woods institutions. Neil (Male, USA, AFD1 and AFD2) presumes that, *"the hand that feeds you owns you."* Neil's claim is that the acute need for African nations to access development funds from external sources means that in the main, they are told what they *"should do"* or *"shouldn't do"* by multinational and bilateral institutions (Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution). From an expert point of view the continent is *"at the mercy of international financial institutions"* (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe). Coupled with that, there is the observation that:

"Africa societies are weak. Therefore it is easier for external institutions to be able to enforce terms on them... in Africa you realise that because the institutions are weak, the policy frameworks are weak... our research based evidence are weak, 'policy based evidence' or research are also weak, so it is easier for an external agency today to try to make

suggestions on policy and so on and so forth” (Expert99 Male, International Financial Institution).

In what may appear as a sweeping generalisation, Expert99 (Male, International Financial Institution) plainly attributes the strong external influence on Africa’s socio-economic trajectory to perceived ‘weakness’. The idea of Africans as lacking impact not only both internationally but also internally, raises the question of whether the continent would be in a position to develop sustainably if hypothetically, the World Bank and IMF would grant the continent the ‘desired’ autonomy and resources on ‘more friendly’ terms.

Still pursuing the subject of lacking impact, another expert believes that weakness has left Africa in a position “*where the international community through the IMF and the World Bank indirectly runs governments*” (Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution). Andrews (2013) provides evidence in support of Expert11’s (Male, International Financial Institution) assumption. In his study on whether and how the IMF and World Bank shape government solutions, Andrews (2013) concludes that not only must African countries accept “the right rules”, but also adopt universal economic structural adjustments programmes. Such ‘one size fits all’ forms of programmes lack sensitivity to the growth requirements of the diverse African economies (Ake, 1996). Substantiating, another development practitioner states that:

“One of the problems widely debated on the operations of these Bretton Woods institutions is the practice of considering all countries as the

same when applying their policies, thus ignoring each country's unique setting and challenges. In the end one-size-fits-all policies have failed to deliver the expected outcomes that would promote development" (Expert66, Male, International Development Institution).

Expert66 (Male, International Development Institution) implies that if seen as an aggregate, the African economy may be the least advanced. Yet, there are economic differences (e.g. GDP and inflation rates), and therefore cases where such differences stipulate the implementation of different growth measures. The “*generic set of solutions*” offered by the international institutions ignores such discrepancies, and mainly presumes that all developing nations face homogeneous economic challenges (Andrews, 2013, n. pag.). This assumption seems to contradict the conceptualisation of sustainable development as context specific, and therefore requiring the implementation of solutions tailored to each place's needs.

The diaspora further hints that the transformation of a perceivably imbalanced relationship between Africa and the Bretton Woods institutions could be achieved by creating ‘competition’ for respective institutions. For instance, Kali (Male, AFD1, UK) opines that:

“We should create a continental bank to fund its development with its own resources... we shouldn't keep borrowing from the IMF and World Bank” (Kali, Male, AFD1, UK).

Supporting Kali's standpoint as described above, another development practitioner supplements that:

“Africa can develop its own institutions, in fact it should do that, it should do that, but it should not see it as an alternative... the idea is just to make sure that Africa benefits from as many opportunities as possible, internal and external, I mean that is the easiest way to go”(Expert33, Male, International Financial Institution).

From the expert's point of view, establishing an own development bank for instance, may be the *“easiest way to go”*, however it raises the question of whether Africans have the capacity to create such an institution. The question of interest is on where the resources for the bank would be derived, granted that African countries seem to persistently rely on external funding through aid and loans. Whoever the investors for an ‘African Central Bank’ would be, they would presumably have specific terms and conditions that warrant a return on their investment. The launching of such financial institution is a project that the AU (2014c) has been planning for five decades now. Furthermore, the diasporan and expert recommendation for setting up a continental bank ought to be reflected on taking into account African Development Bank (AfDB) established in 1964. Africa created the bank in collaboration with several Western and a few Asian countries. The AfDB recognises itself as the premier regional funding agent, which is located at the core of Africa's sustainable socio-economic transformation and environmental utilisation. The institution defines its vision as *“Africa's vision”*, and its *“future”* as *“Africa's future; and its “strategy for 2013–2022 reflects the aspirations of the entire African continent”* (African

Development Bank [The], 2014b). The AfDB's scope of activities is broadly categorised into two as *“mobilizing and allocating resources for investment in RMCs [Regional Member Countries]; and providing policy advice and technical assistance to support development efforts”* (African Development Bank [The], 2014b). These activities are a replica of the World Bank. Indeed, the AfDB acts as a regional partner of the World Bank, signifying a strong influence of the much bigger institution upon the AfDB. Notably, 25 of the 78 AfDB's shareholders are non-African countries.

Nigeria is the largest investor with about 9% share ownership, followed by the USA with more than 6.5% and Japan slightly above 5.4% shares (African Development Bank [The], 2014a). These non-regional members supply the bank with a substantial share of its overall capital (ibid.). By inference, African countries are therefore not (entirely) in control of the funding and policy-making process. Their capacity is regulated by share ownership, which translates into voting rights. As stated in the preceding section of this analysis, the USA and Japan are also the major shareholders of the World Bank and the IMF, which have been arguably less successful in sustainably spurring the continent's economic and social progress. Nonetheless, AfDB's funding *“to low-income countries is limited to funds raised from donor governments, most lending goes to middle-income countries, particularly North Africa, and to the private sector”* (The Civil Society Coalition on the African Development Bank, 2014). The poorest African countries, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa facing immense food shortages may have a very limited access to AfDB's resources – Hence, and arguably, this potentially accounts for unequal

growth between the North and South African regions (cf. AfDB, 2011; WEF et al., 2013; World Bank, 2013).

As Africa's potential sources of development finance, emerging economies like China and Brazil are providing the continent (especially the Sub-Saharan region) with some development funding. By so doing, the two countries appear to be covering the perceived gap left by the AfDB. Simultaneously they also seem to be creating a form of competition for the Bretton Woods institutions. Nonetheless, another development practitioner comments that:

“What we observe in the relationship with China is that, in principle they have a good relationship, because they are giving Africa access to infrastructure, access to development finance... At the same time what we find is that, the Africans are not driving the relationship... At the moment it looks like China is driving the process and if China is driving the process, obviously Chinese interest will be more protected than the African interests. So the challenge for African countries is how to be more assertive in this relationship and also to demand that China strikes a balance between its interests and Africa's development needs” (Expert01, Male, International Development Institution)

Expert01 (Male, International Development Institution) implies that the state of Africa–China interaction does not reflect a mutually beneficial cooperation either. African leadership remains rather a passive actor as revealed by the same expert cited above. Akin to the Africa–World Bank/IMF partnerships, the continent appears

to be situated in a position where its “voice” fails to “demand more careful attention” (Nkrumah 1963, p.x) to its development needs from key global partners. The collective role of Africans as the principal driver of sustainable progress will partly depend on the continent’s capacity to influence the rules of the game not only within the short-term, but also across generations. This lack of influence can also be tied to the continent’s contribution to the resources collectively owned by the international institutions in question, and the capacity of African leadership to negotiate fair deals on behalf of their continental citizens.

7.6. Brand Africa and value generation: Linkage to corporations

Porter (1990) argues that “*national prosperity is created... It does not grow out of a country’s natural endowments*” (p.73). The endowments have to be processed into value for organisations (as corporations and small medium enterprises), societies and nations, who also must be able to capture and benefit from the value (Lepak et al., 2007). Collectively, organisations contribute to ‘sustained national prosperity’ through innovation and competition (Porter, 1998). Governments play enabler and catalytic roles by creating environments that permit organisations to innovate and compete on both local and international markets (ibid.). Innovation follows from the utilisation of a range of resources available to organisations (Lepak et al., 2007). We posit that these scholarly thoughts can be translated to the conception of *brand Africa’s* role in sustainable development. Africa can be envisioned as a big organisation with rich reserves of competitive resources (e.g. arable land and minerals) that the conglomerate ‘only’ has to exploit to create value. At the centre of the conglomerate are the African people, who are not only resources themselves, but

also can collectively turn other resources into value for themselves. Within organisations, people play a pivotal role in innovation and value generation, as they are the ones who create solutions, products and services for target stakeholders (Ind, 2007).

In general, the people in an organisation are a strategic asset. Every member's contribution is key to how the organisation performs and the competitiveness of the corporate (service) brand. The same logic can be applied to the collective role of Africans – from youth, women and men to African leaders. Ordinary African men, women and youth collectively contribute to the socio-economic progress of Africa (which reflects their progress), and must be invested in as well as empowered without exclusion. Within the sphere of corporate branding, de Chernatony et al. (2011) observe that, *“it is not unusual for an organisation to be under utilising its brand assets through an inability to recognise what is occurring inside the organisation”* (p.58). This trend is partly observable in the context of *brand Africa*, as reflected by the perceived exclusion of women and youth from socio-economic resources and opportunities. African women are the main actor in value creation, yet their capacity appears to be suppressed by socio-cultural practices. In organisations that seek to competitively participate in the marketplace as coherent entities, leaders have a very influential role in the overall corporate branding process. They strategically manage corporate resources, and define the brand vision and strategy. Particularly, the leaders of a corporate service brand have to align their employees and their activities with the brand vision and strategy (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006). The leaders are also required to act as brand champions. We argue that this is fundamentally similar to the role that African leaders should play to promote the

effectiveness of the African people in sustainable development, and therefore, the attractiveness of *brand Africa* as an assessment of what Africans do collectively.

In his conception of the resource-based view of the firm, Barney (1991) underlines how valuable, rare and imperfectly imitable resource endowments provide an organisation with (sustained) competitive advantages. In order to perform successfully and excel their competitors, organisations strategically manage their resources (Kotler and Armstrong, 1996), which entail physical capital such as plant and machinery, technology and access to raw materials, as well as geographic location (Barney, 1991). Organisations also possess a set of organizational and human capital resources in varying constellations. The efficiency with which the resources at the disposal of each firm are utilised by the organisation to generate value is crucial for competitiveness (cf. Lepak et al., 2007; Porter, 1990). Therefore, an organisation must not only understand and evaluate its resources, but also design and adopt value-creating strategies. Our analysis has reiterated that Africa is endowed with agricultural and mineral resources that, if optimally utilised, can provide a foundation for the continent's sustainable development (a review of the continent's resource endowments has also been provided in chapter 3, e.g. gold, diamonds, tantalum and vast arable land are some of the valuable resources available to Africa).

The African agricultural sector and its cultivatable land represent a highly competitive resource with a capacity to address the needs of both domestic and international markets. Equally, the mineral reserves are another valuable physical capital resource which, on the basis of global reports, can be designated as

predominantly non substitutable, rare and imperfectly imitable (cf. AfDB, 2011; World Bank [The], 2013). However to borrow Porter's words, "*the stock of factors that [Africa] enjoys... is less important than the rate and efficiency with which it creates, upgrades and deploys them in particular industries*" (Porter, 1990, p.73). The pressing issue then becomes that of whether and how the continent strategically makes use of its resources across generations. While organisations invest in their key departments for instance through infrastructure, skills and competencies development (Kotler and Armstrong, 1996), nations constantly create and upgrade their industries (Porter, 1998). However, an entity such as Africa faces the task of both 'departmental' and 'industrial' development in order to allow fuller resource utilisation and therefore maximise value generation. Africa's lack of industrialisation is coupled with lack of innovation, and therefore translates into minimal value generation by the continent's two key assets (agricultural and natural resources). The underutilisation of African resources also undermines the attractiveness of *brand Africa*, as exemplified by ideas regarding lack of action (e.g. not producing sufficient food internally), or 'an uneducated Africa'.

The above stated observations imply that the 'conglomerate' Africa requires a value creation strategy (or a set of innovation strategies) for turning its competitive natural resources into wealth for the inhabitants on a sustainable basis. The issue of strategic resource management for value generation comes to the foreground. We contend that the application of strategic resource management to the continent represents a point where the modelling of *brand Africa* and its contribution to sustainable development also starts to adopt the general theoretical elements of corporate strategy – as advanced by the scholars cited above who include Porter (1990 and 1998), Barney

(1991) and Lepak et al. (2007) among others. However, at the centre of Africa's strategic resource management are the people. Collectively, they are the individuals who operate and maintain industries, social infrastructure and transport networks which are all tangible facilitators of long-term socio-economic progress. As intangible sources of value, Africans' performances are thus as crucial to sustainable development as are the activities undertaken by members of any given corporation for boosting competitiveness (e.g. innovation). The main difference however is that, the collective impact of people's role does not stop with innovation, but also spreads into the branding of the continent as people centric (similar to a corporate service brand).

Our results further indicate that Africa tends to have a low bargaining power within the sphere of international cooperation. Marketers stress the significance of leveraging the resources available to an organisation as a necessity for boosting its power in global relationships (Griffith and Harvey, 2001). A partner's influence derives from its value contribution within the context of the cooperation in question. Within this context, power signifies an organisation's capacity to shape the decisions of its partner, and co-ordinate inter-organisational resources (Griffith and Harvey, 2001). In essence, the organisation and utilisation of the valuable resources owned by an organisation defines the extent of its influence upon a given partnership. Also any partnership *"should be driven by strategic goals"* (Wilson and Jantrania, 1994, p.62), and should create value for each of the partners involved (Griffith and Harvey, 2001; Ulaga, 2003; Wilson and Jantrania, 1994). An organisation therefore assesses, or must evaluate the value added to its business by its suppliers in comparison to alternatives (Wilson and Jantrania, 1994). Based on the competitiveness of its

resources an organisation can then choose one of the three options: I) Maintaining and developing “*a valued relationship*”; II) Divesting from a “*low-value relationship*”; III) Investing in a new supplier relationship (Ulaga, 2003, p. 677).

We argue that analogous with an organisation, Africa faces the same options as above. People make partnerships work or fail based on their decisions and actions (Wilson and Jantrania, 1994, p. 62), regardless of the degree to which their organisations are goods or service oriented. Adding value to exports through processing raw materials, potentially allows Africa to earn more revenue, become less dependent on aid, and achieve more bargaining power (cf. Griffith and Harvey, 2001; Ulaga, 2003; Wilson and Jantrania, 1994). In that way, Africa has the potential to maintain and develop its “*valued*” relationships with international partners. We have noted that the main suppliers of development funds to international institutions appear to be Africa’s competitors (global trends show that places will always compete for international resources). Africa has an option of investing in new supplier relationships. While this may create competition for current suppliers, it will still require Africa to play a more decisive role. In all corporations, partners should have compatible goals and a set of similarities across cultural dimensions (Ulaga, 2003). Such an affinity provides a basis for sustained bilateral collaboration typified by trust and mutual value creation and capture by the partners (cf. Griffith and Harvey, 2001; Kotler and Armstrong, 1996; Lepak, et al., 2007; Porter, 1998; Ulaga, 2003; Wilson and Jantrania, 1994). However, we believe that such affinity may be difficult to attain given the socio-cultural gap between Africa and its international partners. Consequently, more bargaining power is likely to arise out of the strategic management of Africa’s resources internally.

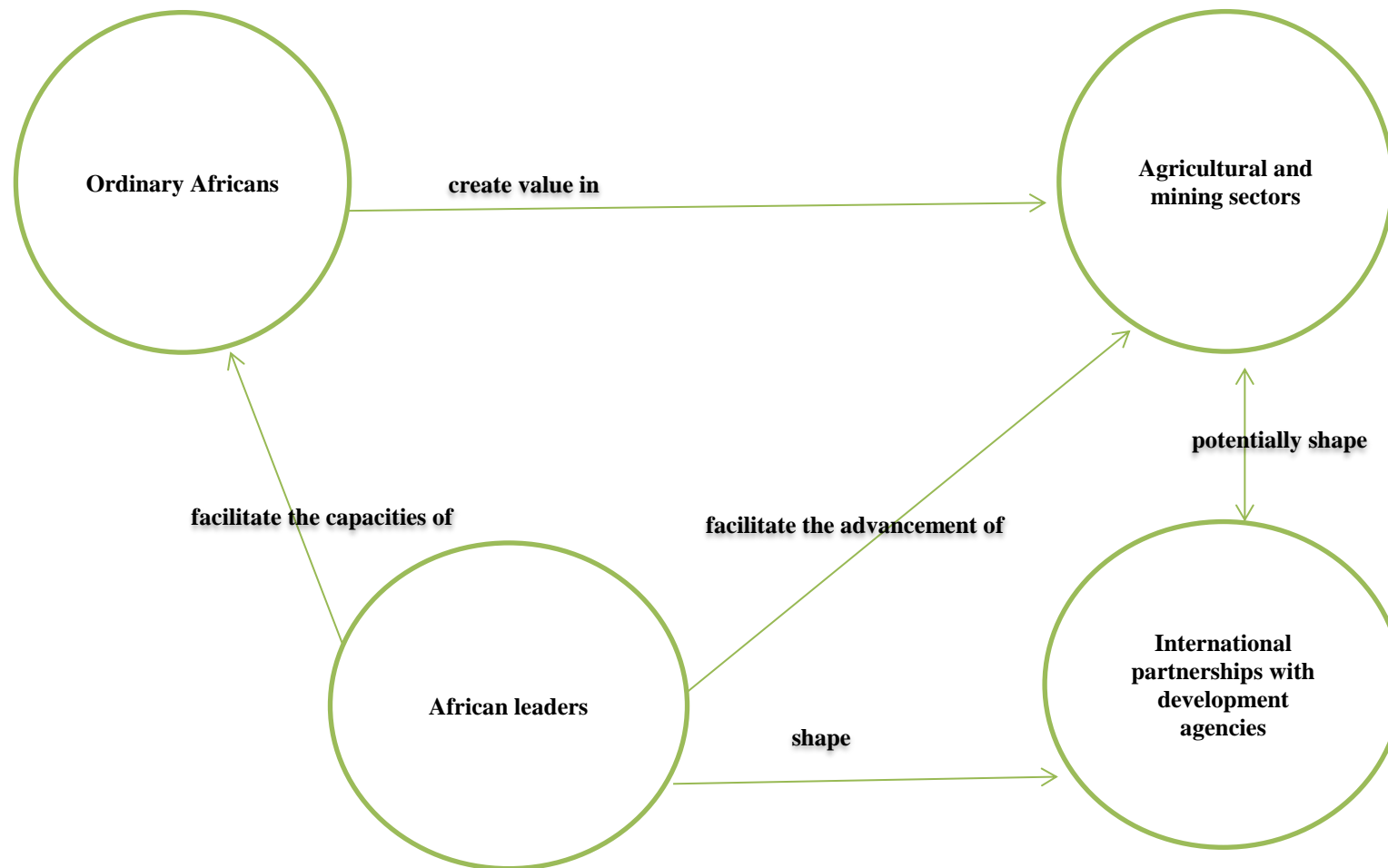


Figure 6: Brand Africa and sustainable development

7.7. Chapter Summary

The core argument advanced by this chapter is that, people collectively make the socio-economic transformation they require ‘a reality’. Africans collectively make Africa in a physical sense, in that they develop the place through their socio-economic activities and initiatives. Collective actions are a source of value, and their value is represented by their accomplishments. In the main, being proactive is crucial to changing Africa from the status quo (poverty) to a brighter and more satisfying state. Leadership acts as the main facilitator of sustainable development by shaping almost every socio-economic dimension of relevance to Africa’s progress. Great leaders are transformers who make great things happen by inspiring and facilitating the empowerment of their people.

This chapter has also presented the different understandings of sustainable development as it relates to Africa. For the diasporan, the fulfilment of basic food needs is of utmost importance. In contrast, experts adopt a much more formal interpretation as outlined by WCED in 1987. They are also different expert views pertaining to sustainable development priorities. For instance, according to one of the experts the priorities are contextual, depending on the circumstances prevailing across African nations at a given time. For another expert, food security is crucial and must be given the highest priority as reflected by increased investment and the empowerment of rural farmers. However, both experts and the diaspora converge in their understanding of ‘sustainable development’ as internally driven, utilising the resources available on the continent.

It has also been noted within this chapter, that industrialisation is necessary to allow economic growth across Africa. Industrialisation will also create local jobs for ordinary Africans. The development of the agricultural sector to its fullest capacity can guarantee Africa's food security. In addition, Africa (represented by its leaders) has to play a more effective role in negotiating policies, objectives and funding of development initiatives with international partners. Currently, Africa has a low bargaining power, which limits its international influence on deciding own socio-economic transformation. Furthermore the chapter has argued that, the observation that sustainable development is a collective process and outcome, implies that all citizens must have access to resources and opportunities. The exclusion of women and youth represents a barrier to Africa's progress, especially in view of the 'fact' that they perform most of the socio-economic activities that drive and sustain the economy.

The linkage of our analysis to marketing has revolved around the subject of strategically managing Africa's resources to create value. The analysis has claimed that the value of Africa's resources to Africans does not lie in rich endowments, but in the utilisation of the very same resources to improve Africans' lives. Organisations strategically invest in, and manage their often scarce/very costly resources in order to outperform their competitors. Africa faces the same strategic task of investing in ways that allow the continent to fully utilise its human and natural resources. Some of the resources are arguably valuable, inimitable, rare and non-substitutable (especially the natural resources such as gold and diamonds). The strategic management of Africa's resources will not only permit more value to be generated out of the same assets, but also, has the potential to strengthen Africa's

position within global partnerships. Also an industrial processing of resources to add more value to them, potentially allows Africans to earn more revenue from international markets, and become less dependent on aid, thereby achieving more bargaining power in the sphere of global cooperation. In different terms, African leaders have the potential to significantly control global partnerships through the strategic management of the continent's resource endowments. In underlining that strategic resource management and mutually rewarding global partnerships are key to corporate competitiveness – regardless of the extent to which an organisation may be goods or service oriented – the chapter has conclusively proclaimed that: Theorising on the contribution of a supranational entity like *brand Africa* to sustainable development embraces the general scholarly thinking on corporate value creation through strategic resource management – against the backdrop of a people centric evolution the *brand*.

8. BRAND AFRICA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CRITICAL FACTORS

*“Africa needs a new type of citizen, a dedicated, modest,
honest and informed man [and woman]” (Kwame Nkrumah).*

8.1. Introduction

This chapter assesses the critical factors that potentially empower Africans to drive their own sustainable development through locally conceived and implemented decisions, projects and initiatives. Broadly, continental integration, human capital development and leadership are identified as the factors that shape Africa’s progress. The chapter emphasises on a collective identity Pan African identity as foundational to sustained economic interactions among Africans. Human capital development equips Africans with the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies for a proactive contribution to their continued and more equitable socio-economic progress. The two dimensions – continental integration and human capital development – emerge from our analysis as critical factors significantly influenced (or controllable) by African leaders through investment and policy initiatives. Therefore leadership plays a pivotal role in sustainable development. In linking our assessment to marketing thought, this chapter contends that the concepts of corporate coherence, strategy and business organisation potentially add value to the management of a supranational entity such as brand *Africa* within the context of sustainable development. The chapter concludes with an overview of the key points.

8.2. Continental integration

Members of the African diaspora online regard Africa's integration as crucial to the enactment of the essential collective actions for promoting Africa's sustainable development. The diaspora persistently highlights the fragmentation of African communities, markets and political frameworks as constraining the continent's capacity to harness and mobilise resources for sustained progress. Continental integration should be holistic as reflected by a collective identity, political and economic convergence. The impediments to African integration and socio-economic transformation are made transparent by comparisons of 'what is happening across the continent' and 'what should be happening' or the factors that are not in place but should be implemented. The diasporan views are reinforced and extended by development practitioners as subsequently analysed.

8.2.1. Collective identity: Significance

A strong wish for the creation of a common African identity prevails among some members of the African diaspora online. The common view is that Africans should see themselves as one "*one race, one people, one nation*" (Diana, Female, AFD2, Sweden). Such opinions suggest that there is need for Africans to identify themselves as of, and belonging to, one massive social group. A collective African identity should be fostered across the continent as a way to trigger joint efforts towards promoting sustainable development. Kali (Male, AFD1, UK), another diasporan member articulates this assumption as follows:

“The African identity needs to be established so that all Africans understand what is required of them to ensure economic growth... If the African identity is established [it] would allow people of different political persuasion to have a common purpose” (Kali, Male, AFD1, UK).

Kali (Male, AFD1, UK) implies that a collective African identity has a multifaceted function as a means to the end (namely economic growth as one of the dimensions of sustainable development). Apart from building a collective consciousness of who Africans are beyond their ethnic and national self-concepts, a collective identity also allows the bonding of people who subscribe to contesting political (and religious) ideologies. Above and beyond, a shared continental identity sensitises Africans to their role either as individuals or collectives, in improving their life standards continuously. The power of a collective identity in configuring people around a *“common purpose”* as raised above by Kali finds support in Wendt’s (1994) analysis. The scholar’s premise is that a strong sense of oneness encourages mutual collaboration among parties who recognise themselves as an entity with common interests (Wendt, 1994). This signifies that Africans have to recognise their interests as similar. Such an appreciation defines the forms of cooperation that eventually emerge and are adopted across Africa (cf. Hemmer and Katzenstein, 2002).

The intrinsic element of a collective identity is its potential to promote a self-regard of individuals as equal or similar in some way(s) (Tajfel, 1981). Neil (Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA) makes this clear when he claims that, *“we [Africans] are all valuable... that’s important moving forward”*. This signifies that there should be a

sense of self-worth and some degree of perceived egalitarianism among Africans, to allow them to view themselves, and work together, as a group despite diversity. Individuals need to see themselves *“as relatively equal members of a shared community”* (Hemmer and Katzenstein, p.575), which provides incentive for joint contribution to Africa’s progressive transformation. Hence:

“African unity simply means acknowledging our differences and planning a way forward... In order to realistically begin this transition we must first be able to dialogue and discuss each other’s responsibilities [with] respect to developing the continent” (Neil, Male, AFD1, USA).

Neil (Male, AFD1, USA) implies that African unity is based on tolerating pluralism, whereby all ethnic differences are allowed to co-exist. Furthermore, Neil gives dialogue a central place in facilitating what Paul (Male, AFD1, USA) describes as *“good relations and reconciliation”* among people of African descent. From the diasporan perspective, a collective African identity should be founded on an ideology such as Nkrumahism:

“Our understanding of "African identity" is "completely incorporated into the ideological system of Nkrumahism, which holds as one of its basic principles: "All peoples of African descent, whether they live in North or South America, the Caribbean, or in any other part of the world are Africans and belong to the African nation" (Nkrumah, 1970: 87)"...” (Ray, Male AFD1, USA).

Ray's allusion to Nkrumah's underlines the historical and founding attempts at uniting Africans on the continent and beyond. The ideological principle is a more broad assimilation of the diaspora into the concept of 'African' (which itself appears vague). Nkrumahism awards primacy to a Pan African identity over ethnic or local self-concept as a prerequisite for unity, and ultimately the advancement of Africans' welfare (Poe, 2003). The ideology presumes that all Africans are related (ibid.), spiritually connected (Williams, 2007) and must jointly act and self-determine their collective progress (Poe, 2003). Born in an era of colonisation, the agenda of the Pan African identity was initially to unite Africans in their fight against imperialism (Poe, 2003; Williams, 2007). However, the diasporan call for a collective identity seems to be primarily motivated by the need to cultivate a capacity for self-sustenance, and turn Africa into a prosperous continent on a sustainable basis. Nkrumah saw Africa's strength in attaining both political and economic independence as lying in the coming together of African people politically and economically. He advocated 'African nationalism' as the bedrock of development. His ideology was popular across Africa, culminating into the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 (Legum, 1964) (OAU is the now African Union). A 'nation' such as Nkrumah conceived of would be a collective imagination that becomes legitimate and materialised through shared systems of symbols, beliefs, as well as group and institutional practices (cf. Anderson, 1991). At the heart of a 'nation' lies a national identity – the equivalent of a Pan African identity as Nkrumahism envisioned it.

However, the notion of a Pan African identity also raises a question of what it means to be 'African' as noted above, and who is/are 'African'. Except where

allusion is made to skin pigment, it is not clear whether the North African (mostly Arab regions) are viewed by the diaspora as being ‘African’ in the same sense that the Sub-Saharan region may be. Inferences can only be made on the basis of the comments offered. In another expert’s words, “*Africa is a diverse society* (Expert99 Male, International Financial Institution). Such diversity is manifest even within individual countries such as Nigeria with a population of 177,155,754, and which is comprised of 250 ethnic groups who speak either one or more of the 500 indigenous languages (CIA 2014). It is already a tremendous challenge to foster a sense of identity as ‘Nigerian’ for instance among the village women and men who see themselves as Yoruba and Igbo, inter alia (Adibe, 2009). Consequently, it appears practically impossible for a collective identity to form at a continental level.

Nonetheless, from a diasporan perspective ‘Africans’ are similar on the basis of shared historical and cultural experiences. For example, a development practitioner expresses that Africans “*have been dominated and subjugated to the worst excess or the brutalities of man, from slavery to colonialism*” (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe). In contrast, the diasporan members online look beyond the well-documented historical experiences and how they contributed to the impoverishment of Africa through political and economic exploitation (e.g. Nkrumah, 1963). Their interest appears to be in the currently observed common phenomenon across Africa. Carl (Male, AFD1, USA) reveals this through an example as follows:

“Culture is the word that comes to mind most when thinking of Africans. Their clothes and other adornment, art, food, personality, history. This is what appeals to me about African people” (Carl, Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA).

By inference Carl is addressing the elements of the “*African culture*” and its richness. The African culture can be classified as a factor that firstly delineates the continent from other places. Secondly, the concept is arguably constructed at a level of abstraction where for instance, an individual can imagine the ‘British culture’ regardless of the multicultural dimensionality of the UK. The ‘British culture’ may be vague or even debatable, yet it bears dimensions with enough visibility to allow a knower to draw distinctions between it and ‘the French’ or ‘German culture’ for example. In every day dealings, one often comes across references such as ‘African food’ in the same way for example that the category ‘Indian’ or ‘Chinese’ is applied to identify cuisines. Other presumably layman labels such as ‘African party’, ‘African hairstyles’ and ‘African clothes’ uniquely evoke sets of general associations in the perceiver’s head, despite the vastness and diversity of Africa. Arguably, the category ‘African’ becomes both a signifier of the continent’s inhabitant(s) and certain ways of doing things that lead to concrete outcomes and ideas in observers’ heads. This draws our attention back to Greg’s (Male, AFD1, USA) allusion to the “*way Africans live*”. We contend that how Africans live is also a manifestation of a collective culture, and it does not only determine Africans’ progress, but also defines them as a social group. Zola (Male, China, AFD1) offers another elaboration below, which further permits some of the identity attributes to become more transparent as follows:

“We have a strong will to live and do it whole hearted... We come from a place where death by disease, poverty, starvation and war is common yet we still happily and proudly call it home. Almost every African has a deeply imbedded appreciation for everyday, every heartbeat, every smile and every hope, I believe more than any other race in the world. That does not make us better neither does it make us less than any other Peoples but it identifies us, it makes us African” (Zola, Male, AFD1, China).

From (Zola’s Male, AFD1, China) perspective, we extract the idea that Africans embrace life on the continent with sincerity and appreciation (this is not to claim that it is exclusive to Africans only, rather it appears to present Africans in an interesting light, given their impoverishment in general). Zola, like many other diasporan members, believes that Africans value their ‘home’ as signified by taking pride in it despite the perversity of death. Also, they find no shame in identifying as Africans, and they seem to have an appreciation of what may be viewed as daily nuances. Together such attributes, which can be tentatively conceptualised as elements of cultural values, do not make Africans superior to other social groups. Instead, the ‘values’ (pride, sincerity, appreciation, etc.) only distinguish the people. Like any other culture, the African “*culture makes*” Africans “*unique*” (Expert44, Female, International Institution), implying that it identifies them as described by Zola (Male, AFD1, China) above. Yet the general consensus is that “*there isn’t... a sense of togetherness*” (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe) that encourages Africans to act and “*think as a unit*” (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe). Arguably, the perceived ‘cultural values’ such as appreciating life and

taking pride in 'home' appear to be of limited significance to the sustainable development of Africans, unless the values are translated into actions that facilitate the desired progress. Also, there are a number of issues identified by the African diaspora as undermining the formation and operation of a collective African identity as revealed in the following section.

8.2.2. *Collective identity: Challenges*

The majority of the African diaspora members online appear to have doubt in the realisation of a collective African identity (and broadly, unity). In general members conclude that, "*Africa's integration is a divine idea*" Nancy (Female, AFD2, Holland) in the sense that "*a unified Africa would be an amazingly powerful entity... it will never happen though*" (Neil, Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA) given that:

"There is so much ignorance and division that we do not see it becoming a reality... We just have to learn to celebrate our similarities, and appreciate our cultural differences" (Nancy, Female, AFD2, Holland).

Apparently, and judging from Nancy's claim (Female, AFD2, Holland) the pessimism permeating the diasporan community online stems from the standpoint that, Africans on the ground appear to lack an appreciation of the benefits of integration. Unless an awareness of the rewards of integration is created among the Africans, unity will be difficult to attain. By implication, this assumption appears to (rather harshly) claim that Africans do not value integration due to ignorance. Diasporan pessimism may also be due to the history of civil wars and social conflicts initiated within nations across the continent. For example religious conflicts in

Nigeria, genocide in Rwanda or a “*pattern of intolerance and antagonism against African immigrants*” in South Africa (Steenkamp, 2009, p.439) are signs of divisions among people in a given country. Such conflicts expose and magnify the complexity of establishing a sense of collectiveness among Africans at a broader level such as the continent. Moreover, the diaspora tends to describe Africans as “*still very tribal*” (Ali, Male, USA, ADC1) and “*their thinking, their mentality and attitude still reveal that*” (Ali, Male, USA, ADC1). Another diasporan member goes on to share the following judgement:

“... that's why they're so damned far behind the rest of the world... They don't want unity anymore than they [want to] be around each other. They have more hatred for each other than they do for racism” (Jack, Male, ADC1, USA).

While the origin and structure of ‘tribalism’ in Africa is debatable (e.g. Apthorpe, 1968; Mafeje, 1971),¹⁴ Jack’s (Male, ADC1, USA) assumption stresses the intensity of perceived antagonism among some African tribes. To this effect, Jack juxtaposes tribalism with racism. Both are barriers to sustainable development, as they are detrimental to a more equitable economic growth. In that way, they contribute to poverty among certain social groups. To focus the analysis more, tribalism excludes certain Africans from accessing and utilising ‘public’ resources, resulting in social conflicts. By isolating certain citizens as not ‘equal’ or belonging to the rest (cf.

¹⁴One theory maintains that tribalism was introduced by colonialism as a means to weaken Africans. Another rival theory holds that tribalism had always ‘existed’ across Africa (Apthorpe, 1968; Mafeje, 1971).

Apthorpe, 1968; Englebert, 2000b; Mafeje, 1971), tribalism breeds lack of trust and intolerance (Poe, 2003). Tribalism also results in failure among Africans to accept their ‘brothers and sisters’ (Poe, 2003) as family. Such outcomes undermine both the formation of a collective identity, and the prospects of a joint contribution to the attainment of a common goal (namely, a more equitable and lasting socio-economic progress).

There is also a strong belief among the diaspora that the creation of national borders intensified divisions – as reflected by tribalism (Apthorpe, 1968). Therefore, from a diasporan viewpoint, *“the best thing Africa can do is to drop colonial boundaries and build nations based on our perspective”* (Kali, Male, AFD1, UK). A development expert elaborates as follows:

“If you also remember current boundaries that we have in Africa were not actually boundaries that Africans designed. These are boundaries that were designed by Europeans, during the Berlin conference. There was no Ghana, there was no Nigeria before the partition of Africa”
(Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution).

The geographic boundaries are viewed as ‘artificial’ in the sense that they lack rooting in Africans’ understanding of who they are (Nkrumah, 1963). The boundaries were merely imposed for administrative purposes (ibid.). Secondly, the demarcations, which suddenly introduced the idea and operation of nations, resulted in the questioning of the legitimacy of some African States and their institutions. This means that even today some citizens may not acknowledge the decisions and

actions undertaken by ‘their’ States (Englebert, 2000). At the same time, the measures implemented by States may marginalise distinct ethnicities (ibid.), thereby leading to social exclusion and ultimately undermining sustainable growth. However, neither redrawing the borders nor completely eliminating them appears to be a feasible option, especially after more than half a century since African nations began attaining political independence. Arguably, attempting to implement either of the two options may lead to more internal conflicts, as it will involve relocating and ‘re-defining’ people’s identities (although the idea is to establish a Pan African identity).

The practicality of administrating boundaries as a way to promote integration can be learned from the EU. While Europe used to be a continent characterised by wars (European Union [The], 2014b), the gradual transformation and integration of the continent through the EU did not dispense with national demarcations in a geographical sense. Arguably, the retention of national boundaries signifies the preservation of national identities. The latter may be deemed of as co-existing with a supranational identification of individuals as EU citizens. In other words, the EU populace may understand itself both as EU citizens and Austrian, British or Greek for example (although the EU identity is not always embraced by some countries or individuals). Similarly, Africans may be ‘African’ but they are also Nigerian, Sudanese, Ghanaian, South African and Malian among other national identities. What this suggests therefore is that, there appears to be a need for individuals to retain that sense of belonging to a specific nation marked by territorial boundaries even in the face of meta regional integration. Rather than eradicating borders in the physical sense, increased mobility of Africans continental wide appears to be a more

practical solution if strategically implemented (as exemplified by the EU). However, even in that case:

“Geographic disparities... and environment makes it almost impossible to have any kind of 'unified' Africa” (Neil, Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA).

With its diverse terrain, Africa is a massive landmass: *“If you look at the size of Africa you fit China into it, USA into it, you fit Brazil and the whole of Europe into it...”* (Expert99, Male, International Financial Institution) and still have enough land to fit in India and Japan (Economist [The], 2010). Therefore, infrastructure, which is however lacking across Africa, becomes central to linking the dispersed African population. Sean, another diasporan member reveals the broad impact of an infrastructural deficit upon African integration as follows:

“None of the countries in Africa have the necessary infrastructure to become an economic powerhouse. Communication is key, from phones and Internet to roads, trains and planes. A growing economy needs these things to ship resources, commodities and people from one place to another, no point having gold, oil or diamonds in a part of a country that is remote from population centres is it? In early economies you can get growth of maybe 10% but it is not sustainable without infrastructure” (Sean, Male, USA, AFD1).

Sean focuses our attention on how lack of infrastructure restricts the movement of

people, goods, capital resources and services, and therefore the forging of links among Africans. As another development practitioner confirms, “*we also have issues of poor infrastructure. It’s very difficult to travel within African countries*” (Expert01, Male, International Development Institution). Such constraints impede the intensification of socio-economic interactions. Without interstate roads and rail it becomes difficult for the populace to travel, and connect African communities. Roads and rail networks link “*poor regions... to richer regions*” (Expert33, Male, International Financial Institution), thereby facilitating the inclusion of all Africans in the development agenda. It is through such linkage that Africans may come to view themselves as included in the sustainable development agenda, and as belonging to a larger collective beyond their nations and tribes. Such linkage potentially creates common experiences, thereby convincing Africans to collaborate politically and economically for the betterment of their socio-economic circumstances over a long period of time. Hence Africa’s and its leadership’s challenge remains that of building infrastructure to facilitate mobility, and foster a Pan African identity as the cornerstone of cooperation for sustainable development.

8.2.3. Political integration: Significance

Most of the African diasporan members online consider political integration to be a building block of the continent’s socio economic improvement. They associate Africa’s global socio-economic influence and internal cohesion with the establishment of a “*United Countries of Africa*” (Casey, Male, AFD2, USA). Such an entity potentially increases the prospects of the continent becoming “*the World’s*

leading superpower” (Molly Female, USA, AFD1 and AFD2). Casey (Male, AFD2, USA) sheds more light on the issue during a discussion on integration, as follows:

“Empire is what we are talking about here. There's no way any one nation in Africa or anywhere can do it all by themselves... You have to combine all the lands of Africa to compete with the global empires of China, Russia and the Western world of America and Europe” (Casey, Male, AFD2, USA).

The essence of Casey’s observation above is that size is power, implying that international competitiveness derives from the volume, impact and value of resources owned by a market actor. As individual countries, African nations are competing with superpowers like USA, or aspirant superpowers like China for a share of the global market. The latter fosters countries’ socio-economic growth. Yet most African countries are small, and have small markets and economies (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa [The] et al., 2012). Therefore, they lack the capacity to compete sustainably at such high level of market participation. Pooling together natural resources can amplify the strength of African countries and utilise it to facilitate progress. As a *“group of countries ruled by a single person, government, or country”* (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2014), the ‘African empire’ should also be characterised by *“one army and elite force mechanism to protect infrastructure and sovereignty”* (Mas, Male, AFD1, UK). Another diasporan member adds that:

“Africa should have one single army. Whites attack Africa united... soon Africans should protect themselves together” (Leo, Male, AFD1, USA).

As controversial as it may be, the concept ‘White’ as mentioned above by Leo (Male, AFD1, USA) is used as a reference *“to the skin colour of European or people of European extraction since the early 17th century”* (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). The usage of ‘White’ is also revealing in the sense that it identifies Africa as the opposite, namely ‘Black’. Analysed from this angle, the diasporan viewpoint implies that political integration reflects unity among the ‘black’ people as a means to protect themselves from their ‘enemies’, who are white Europeans and Americans or the *“white America”* (Niel, Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA). Leo’s invocation of the idea of ‘whites versus Africa’ is rather prevalent online. It can also be linked to the extensively documented history of colonisation and slavery, where Europeans attained domination over ‘black’ Africans (e.g. Chamberlain, 1999; Cohen, 2008). However, the significance of Leo’s statement to this context of analysis lies in the advocacy for a collective effort towards ensuring international security and enabling Africans to commit their resources to continuous development. Many of the African States are *“too small, too disconnected, too weak and too fragmented”* (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe) for them to defend and protect their sovereignty and wealth from external influence. Indeed, Ruta (2005) stresses that the convergence of independent parties to secure international security represents *“the oldest of the reasons for political integration”* (p.6). Interestingly, the African diaspora does not seem to acknowledge the presence and the role of the African

Standby Force (AFS) commissioned by the African Union¹⁵ (African Union [The], 2014a). This suggests that AFS lacks visibility and impact from a diasporan perspective.

Also, if strategically invested in, a continental military has the capacity to establish the much needed internal peace across Africa. Left on their own, the majority of African countries are politically vulnerable, as exemplified by “*Rwanda and Burundi... [which are] micro-states*” (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe). Such countries face a high risk of strong ethnic rivalry and armed conflicts, and like most African countries, lack the military resources to ensure national security. Yet:

“Armed conflicts do not favour the implementation of decisions taken by the heads of state for the acceleration of the integration process in Africa” (Expert44, Female, International Development Institution).

Expert44 (Female, International Development Institution) expresses that civil conflicts undermine the capacity of individual countries to fully utilise their potential by diverting key resources to the re-establishment of internal peace. In essence, the global picture reveals that not a single place has developed whilst periodically going through civil wars. The impact of ethnic wars on the continent’s development is

¹⁵The African Standby Force intervenes “in grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity... the ASF is based on standby arrangements with Africa’s five sub-regions (African Union [The], 2014a).

illustrated by Easterley and Levine's (1995) hypothesis on 'Africa's growth tragedy'. The two scholars provide evidence showing the prevalence of widespread and deep ethnicity across African regions as a perverse barrier to the continent's sustainable progress. Being a form of tribalism, ethnic fragmentation results in lack of consensus on developmental goals, policies and allocation of resources (ibid.). Evidently these issues in turn fuel more tension and disruption of initiatives undertaken to support socio-economic growth. Comparing Africa to Asia, Easterley and Levine (1995) conclude that between 25% and 40% differences in growth in favour of Asia, are accounted for by ethnic diversity across Africa. Therefore, the "*cycle of African vs. African*" must stop (Casey, Male, AFD2, USA). These observations expose the need for restoring and promoting peace "*intra Africa*" (Expert55, Female, International Development Institution) starting at national levels and spreading out through the continent (adopting an 'inside-out approach').

Collectively, African nations also need to create an enduring stable environment that can attract external investors on a long-term basis. As an investor:

"You don't want to trade in a place where there is political tension because the risk in the country is so high" (Expert01, Male, International Development Institution).

The development practitioner cited above implies that investors cannot forecast the viability, sustainability and future outcomes of their investments. Therefore, they lose confidence in business prospects. Coupled with that, risk aversion means that investors tend to avoid places characterised by ongoing political disturbances, as

such places are politically volatile and turbulent environments. Hence without political harmony across Africa:

“Sustainable development becomes hypothetical... there must be peace and political stability to enable sustainable development” (Expert44, Female, International Development Institution).

Furthermore, the lack of political unity attracts outsider influence leading to a *“dangerous exploitation”* (Will, Male, AFD2, USA) of the continent both politically and economically. It is alleged that in some cases opportunities are created for external agents to meddle with internal interactions. Once again, Expert22 (Male, University Professor, Europe) offers an elaborate account of the issue as follows:

“And the perversity of the lack of unity is that we are now in a position where people are able to divide and rule, to exploit us much more easily. So we become, if you like, an easy target for people to prey on us because they know that if you go to Africa you offer, you know, civilians money and they will kill each other” (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe).

In line with Will (Male, AFD2, USA), Expert22 (Male, University Professor, Europe) implies that internal fragmentation leads to manipulation. It becomes easy for outsiders to take advantage of Africans by offering ‘cash’ incentives mainly to the impoverished individuals. Such manipulation is often associated with foreign acquisition of African natural resources on unfair and illegal terms. As a

consequence, Africans have “*very little control of their resources*” (Noah, Male, AFD1, USA) – the limited control can also be attributed to the easily manipulated “*greedy dictators/thugs*” (Josh, Male, AFD2, USA). Unity reduces the scope and scale of external manipulation and Africans’ temptation to undermine one another internally. A political union also minimises external exploitation by offering a common platform to Africans to engage in dialogue, create and implement a continental policy framework for safeguarding the continent and its resources. Currently, “*it’s very difficult for Africa to speak with one voice*” (Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution). The impact of lack of political cooperation among African nations becomes particularly visible through events such as exemplified below:

“If you remember quite recently when the West mandated that Libya should be attacked, even within the continent there was no common voice. You know the Nigerians talk differently, the South Africans talk differently, the Ghanaians talk differently, so again that kind of incoherence of policy, whether its political or economic that is actually making it very difficult for Africa to be speaking in a single voice”
(Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution).

In presuming that the West (Europe and USA) authorised military action against Libya in March 2011,¹⁶ Expert11 (Male, International Financial Institution) portrays Africa as a weak political actor both internally and globally. The suggestion appears

¹⁶However, the Countries that voted for the UN military action were: USA, UK, Portugal, France, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon, Colombia, Gabon, South Africa and Nigeria (BBC, 2011).

to be that, the continent does not have sufficient capacity for political self-determination, that is, to unanimously decide on political actions and policies linked to its sustainable growth. Africa's perceived failure to "*speak with one voice*" (Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution) also indicates the continent's lack of an effective foreign and security policy like that of the EU.¹⁷ Such a policy would empower African nations to act as one entity in international negotiations (Nkrumah, 1963). Simultaneously, political coherence should be treated as a foundation for increased intra-African economic integration.¹⁸ Expert11 further elaborates as follows:

"Political integration must always happen before economic integration. You know, but what we try to do in Africa, we try to say now look politically we want to go our own way, but let's be economically one person. If South Africa and Zimbabwe are not good neighbours politically, then economically it's not going to work. So the problem we have with the two entities economic integration and political integration is that the logic for most leaders, which is the wrong one, is always to take the economic one first, 'we want to be exporting to Sudan but we do not care what happens in Sudan'. That's not right, you must care; the political environment in Sudan, if that's sorted out then you can get

¹⁷"EU foreign and security policy, which has developed gradually over many years, enables the EU to speak and act as one in world affairs. Acting together gives the EU's 28 members far greater clout than they would have if each pursued its own policies" (EU, 2014).

¹⁸Economic integration as reflected by a free trade area, common market, customs union, monetary and fiscal union (UNECA, 2012).

economic integration” (Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution).

The underlying assumptions in Expert11’s (Male, International Financial Institution) comment above are that, firstly leaders should show solidarity with their neighbours. Secondly, leaders should also appreciate that the issues such as who is in power and how a country is governed affects the viability and sustainability of economic interactions between nations. To illustrate, the mobility of factors of production (such as capital and labour) and the implementation of free trade agreements are both influenced by the political goals, practices and governance structures prevailing in either of the trading partner countries (cf. Haas and Schmitter, 1964). From this perspective, political harmony must therefore be prioritised before economic integration. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that political integration is not always viewed as a precursor to economic convergence. Countries have traditionally started as economic partners and gradually evolved into political entities, in order to promote a more equitable distribution of economic benefits (Haas and Schmitter, 1964). Adopting this model of integration, African leaders have tended to (and still) prioritise economic integration over political coherence. They have consequently agreed on, and signed numerous trade agreements yet with a “*dismally poor implementation record*” (Hartzenberg, 2011, p.1). For a continent of which nations are characterised by xenophobia (Steenkamp, 2009) and tribal/ethnic conflicts among others political differences, prioritising economic integration over political harmony appears to be a misguided if not fruitless approach. The approach fails to acknowledge the mediating role of internal cohesion and mutual trust in fostering economic cooperation on a long-term basis. Apparently, there must be a

consciousness of kind to allow Africans to cooperate economically in order to facilitate their sustainable development.

8.2.4. *Political integration: Challenges*

From the African diasporan standpoint, the political integration of Africa falls within the responsibilities of African leaders. A political union has therefore not been accomplished due to a number of leadership issues. For instance, Mia (Female, AFD2, France) reveals such problems in one of her detailed email interviews conducted online as follows:

“Politicians are just as useless as the AU... shouldn’t they be rallying their people around African unity... They even divide their own nations according to ethnicity... I think they really choose to divide to benefit their political career” (Mia, Female, AFD2, France).

By inference, most African politicians are perceived as incompetent and divisive. Their approach is classified as driven by the need for personal gains. There is lack of accountability to, and concern for the welfare of, the ordinary Africans. Apart from pursuing own interests, some of the leaders tend to “*see their ethnic group[s] as their source of mandate*” (Expert99, Male, International Development Institution). Thus they fail to “*see*” either their nations or “*Africa itself as their source of mandate*” (Expert99, Male, International Development Institution). Such an approach often gives an advantage to the leader’s tribe, as the group receives more resources (cf. Apthorpe, 1968). This implies an act of favouritism, which heightens ethnic tensions and undermines a sense of collectiveness. The act of dividing a

nation is also interlinked with lack of democracy. One of the development practitioners adds that, “*we have bad leadership, people with no democratic values, [people] who deliberately ignore democracy*” (Expert02, Male, Regional Development Institution). The expert assumes that African leadership has an awareness of the significance of democracy, yet chooses to be rather authoritarian. This hints again at the lack of a sense of accountability and a relatively weak influence of ordinary Africans on political leadership. The expert cited above also confirms Mia’s (Female, AFD2, France) observation that (some of the) politicians are not qualified to lead. Hence, they cannot facilitate integration as a foundation for Africa’s progressive transformation. The viewpoint that the leaders “*are just as useless as the AU*” (Mia, Female, AFD2, France) is interesting, given that the AU is comprised of the very same national leaders as representatives of their countries. The leaders can be conceived of as the AU. This implies that they import their leadership values and principles into the AU. This assumption brings to the fore the important question of whether the AU has the capacity to accomplish its objective of integrating Africa. The Union identifies itself as an organisation of which objective is it to facilitate the integration of Africans into a single market and political entity for their prosperity. According to the institution’s website (as of May 22, 2014):

“The vision of the African Union is that of: “An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena” (African Union [The], 2014b).

Despite the AU’s vision, the collective sense among the African diaspora is not just that the “*African Union is inadequate*” (Ray, Male, AFD1, USA), but also, that:

“To believe that this African Union will integrate Africa is a big mistake... It is useless politically. I think it doesn’t know what to do... I have never heard of any single success story... except that it was formed by Nkrumah many years ago” (Mia, Female, AFD2, France).

Offering another set of viewpoints that succinctly capture the diasporan sentiments scattered online, Mia (Female, AFD2, France) exposes the lack of faith in the AU. She hints that the AU is judged on its achievements, and its value lies in the effectiveness of the solutions that it offers to promote Africa’s integration (as a basis for sustainable socio-economic transformation). However from the diasporan standpoint, there is no tangible evidence to sufficiently demonstrate the AU’s achievements in terms of fulfilling its objective. This translates into the characterisation of the Union as politically incompetent. As noted above, the AU is only as effective as the national leaders who constitute it, and the failings of African leadership appear to permeate the AU as well. Reinforcing the diasporan belief, another development practitioner states that:

“Here we have got an African Union, you would think that with the African Union the political issue [of integration] was sorted out, but that is not the case... We still have that case, where the politics of the various countries or regional blocks are not in line with the broader African agenda ... (Expert01, Male, International Financial Institution).

Expert01 (Male, International Financial Institution) suggests that the AU cannot align its nations, and therefore appears to be a rather powerless institution. Evidently, continental fragmentation is most visible within the AU itself. The Union is characterised by internal fragmentation, which partly accounts for the perceived institutional ineffectiveness. For instance, Williams (2007) observes that politically, the AU members tend to disagree on the dimensions of its “security culture”, with its members inclined to act more like bystanders during conflicts. Williams (2007) cites the Darfur crisis in Sudan that turned into a genocide in early 2003, as an instance where the AU failed to intervene effectively. This prompted external intervention, and highlighted Africa’s reliance on the international community for restoring peace and stability in the region. Another expert invokes the EU to demonstrate the role that the AU should play in promoting integrations:

The E.U. has been imagined as a response, a vaccine against French pride, German pride, Italian pride, English pride, Polish pride etc. The Union was conceived as a remedy to the disasters caused by nationalist "pride" in the past 150 years. The African Union has to do the same and step by step, people have to see further than being Akan, Yoruba, Bantu etc. and also further than belonging to local states as Ivory Coast, Democratic Congo, South Africa, Senegal etc. They are all that but they have to see they are more than that” (Expert88 Male, Historian, France).

Expert88 (Male, Historian, France) implies that the EU managed to find common ground among the different European nations who had over many years cherished

their pride, and likely viewed their nationalities as more superior to others. The policies, dialogue and events among other instruments deployed by the EU, were (are) key to the fostering of a common political direction in pursuit of democracy and political harmony among citizens. The African Union should play the same integrative role in order to enable harmonious interactions across the continent. However, it is evident from the diasporan and expert viewpoints, that the capacity of the AU to attain political harmony across the Africa will depend on whether: many of the political leaders who represent their countries at the AU start to embrace the values of democracy, and seeing it as crucial to sustainable development; perceiving continental unity as a common goal to be achieved internally through their facilitation, and therefore; are willing to set aside tribal and political differences for the purpose of cooperation as means to a more equitable and sustainable economic growth for their citizens.

8.2.5. Economic integration: Significance

The diasporan members evince a strong wish for African countries to be integrated economically. One of the reasons in favour of such integration is namely that, various countries have “*overriding commonalities that call for the same solutions*” (Noah, Male, AFD1, USA). The solutions should therefore be jointly created and supported. Ray (Male, AFD1, USA) makes this explicit through the following portrayal of the situation:

“No country in Africa exports more food than it imports. All countries have these exact same problems... So our solutions must be continental in scope. For example, we need clean water and domestically grown food,

self-sufficiency in basics like food and water. No one little country can solve these types of macro problems. They must be solved on the continental level... This is why continental unity is needed. Look at this map: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-17775211>>. See the way the water is distributed all across the continent? That means that the most efficient way to develop those water resources would be [at] continental level. This is why continental unity is so crucial” (Ray, Male, AFD1, USA).

The main idea that we draw from Ray’s remarks is that of economies of scale likely to result from pooling resources together. Ray’s (Male, AFD1, USA) makes this visible by stating that cooperation offers itself as an optimal strategy for sustainable development, especially given that African countries are all dealing with a same set of economic challenges (although the issues are of different magnitude e.g. between Northern and Southern regions). Ray cites the dependence of African countries on external food suppliers as a common issue requiring collective input. He proceeds to reference a report by the BBC (2012) pertaining to MacDonald’s et al. (2012) study on the aquifers spread out across Africa. Ray (Male, AFD1, USA) seeks to demonstrate that the continent has an abundance of resources, which are “*there to be exploited and don’t have to be created,*” as confirmed by Expert33 (Male, International Financial Institution). For instance if (collectively) tapped, groundwater sources can supply Africa with sufficient fresh and irrigation water to combat food insecurity (MacDonald et al., 2012). However the main problem is that African countries cannot (in their national capacities) access such natural resources, as the projects are capital intensive, require highly technical expertise and are therefore

costly. Cooperation entails combining capital and expertise internally, in order to turn natural resources into usable products on a large scale. The diaspora considers such cooperation as not limited to the extraction of resources, but also, extendable to the sphere of intra continental trade.

There is the strong collective sentiment that, *“African countries must be each other’s biggest trade partners and not US, Europe, and Asia”* (Abel, Male, AFD1, USA). Currently, Africa’s markets are poorly linked to each other (World Economic Forum [The] et al., 2013) and internal trade is negligible in comparison to other conglomerate blocks (World Bank [The], 2013c). In 2011, internal trade amounted to a mere 12% as compared to 65% in the European Union, 49% in the North American Free Trade Agreement region, and 25% in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (World Economic Forum [The] et al., 2013). Historically, African markets have been oriented towards the outside (Nkrumah, 1963) since they served as suppliers of raw material to Western countries. This has been part of the explanation for limited focus on promoting economic interactions such as trade and investment intra Africa (World Economic Forum [The] et al., 2013). However from an expert viewpoint, intra Africa trade will create economies of scale. One of the experts outlines the issue as follows:

I think intra Africa trade is the key to create economies of scale (because) some of our economies are small... So we need to create better integration of our domestic markets in order for comparative advantages to be gained from the products we produce (Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe).

Expert22 (Male, University Professor, Europe) implies that increasing the scale of markets will permit companies and entrepreneurs to grow, given a much easier access to larger international markets of consumers and suppliers across the continent. A free market also creates opportunities for African economies to diversify and specialise in processing their factor endowments more efficiently. Furthermore, from a diasporan perspective, intra-African trade potentially boosts Africa's industrialisation and the output of factors of production due to increased competition. Such economic advantages will result mainly from the free movement of goods, services and capital as can be observed in the case of the EU and USA. Another diasporan member notes that economic integration has for instance permitted the EU and USA state to:

“... sell different products to each other. They are diversified. It's like Ebay if you like, one big market where you can buy and sell anything you like, operating under same rules. It is strong; you can't break that collective market” (Mia, Female, AFD2, France).

Mia (Female, AFD2, France) notes how the structural transformation initiated by the EU has allowed the region to transform into a strong, not insignificantly self-sustaining, and highly competitive global market. The EU common market endorses and protects its member States' products from global competition, simultaneously building a diverse pool of more innovative goods and resources for its citizens. The EU market is typified by the freedom of movement of goods, capital, services and people, which is viewed as a right across all member States (ibid.). All members operate under a standardised set of policies for promoting the free movement of the

very same four entities (European Union [The], 2014b). Both the EU and its members ensure that citizens exercise their rights. As an institution, the EU has played a very crucial role in facilitating socio-economic integration across Europe. Such leadership is however lacking from the African context, as revealed and documented in the subsequent section.

8.2.6. *Economic integration: Challenges*

There are several interconnected challenges that emerge from African diasporan discussions on Africa's economic integration. The challenges are made transparent by views on the factors that ought to be, or should be in place in order to allow the expansion of an 'African' economy. For instance, one of the diasporan members remarks that Africa's economic growth stipulates that:

“Measures to ensure increased economic interaction, and the formation of an integrated African economy should be implemented at a supreme level of continental coordination. It is the same thing that Europe and USA did, they both wanted to grow big... Their states came together (Mia, Female, AFD2, France).

Apart from reiterating the point that cooperation promotes growth and the strengthening of economies, Mia (Female, AFD2, France) makes it clear that the realisation of an economic union has to be spearheaded by a continental authority. Therefore, similar to facilitating political integration, the AU should assume the same role in promoting the convergence of national economies across Africa into one entity. For instance, the AU has the responsibility of monitoring and ensuring

the removal of “*trade, migration and other barriers*” (Expert66, Male, International Development Institution). However the AU has “*not been very successful*” during the last five decades despite the observation that, “*the African Union heads of States decided that they wanted to fast track the process*” (Expert01, Male, Global Development Institution). The same expert goes on to reveal that:

*“One of the reasons they have not been very successful in integration has to do with the fact that they do not implement the existing free trade agreements... For example they agreed that they are going to remove all trade barriers but have never done that. So there are lots of tariffs and non-tariffs barriers to trade in Africa, and that makes it very difficult for trade to take place within the region”*¹⁹ (Expert01, Male, International Development Institution).

The essence of Expert01’s (Male, International Development Institution) observation is that, there is a lack of compliance with free trade regulations. This may be due to a tendency to seek the maximisation of self-interests (by exploiting another partner), or due to the absence of an effective punishment for bypassing trade agreements. The scenario described by Expert01 implies African nations seem to be trapped in a ‘Prisoner’s Dilemma’, where each of the trading partners has two choices namely cooperate by removing trade barriers, or defect through retention of the barriers (Axelrod, 2006). A trading partner chooses either options depending on the partner’s goals and what it believes the other partner will do. Suppose a country “*unilaterally*” removes the trade barriers, its economy could be hurt by unfair terms

¹⁹See Figure 7 below.

of trade (Axelrod, 2006. p.7). Hence, there is the assumption that the country is safer keeping its trade barriers regardless of the choice made by another country (ibid.). Nonetheless the pursuit of self-interests leaves both trading partners worse off: *“Because of the mutual advantages of free trade”* two countries would *“be better off”* if they cooperated and eliminated trade barriers (Axelrod, 2006, p.7) especially where economic interaction is desired to be long-term. The situation portrayed above by Expert01 (Male, International Development Institution) also hints at the notion of reciprocity. Countries are likely to offer cooperation where they expect the partner to reciprocate the action (Axelrod, 2006) in future (Trivers, 1971). Hence the retention of trade barriers signifies a lack of trust in another trading partner’s willingness to remove some obstacles to international trade. The lack of trust itself indicates that African countries fear being continuously cheated by their local trading partners, with the risk of exploitation increasing *“when circumstances seem more advantageous”* to the (cheating) partners in future (Trivers, 1971, p, 51).

Apart from drawing our attention to the notion of Prisoner’s Dilemma, Expert01’s (Male, International Development Institution) remarks also suggest that sanctions for the breach of free trade contracts, if any, that are (should have been) put in place by the AU are perceived as bearing a lower cost, than the cost of implementing the agreements. This observation creates the impression that the AU lacks the leadership authority and legitimacy for enforcing regional integration. Our assumption is supported by the fact that the AU introduced several Regional Economic Communities (RECs) (see table 3) during the last five decades, which are evaluated by experts as being, in some cases, non-aligned with the Union’s mission to integrate the continent. The common agenda of these diverse RECs is to initially converge

Alone, the infrastructural deficit and the lack of quality transportation networks complicates and hinders the movement of people and goods between African countries (African Development Bank [The], 2012). Coupled with that, there are long and complex procedures involved in clearing goods at border posts, which increase the financial cost and time of shipping goods within Africa. For example, an average customs transaction involves between 20 and 30 different parties, 40 documents, 200 data elements of which 30 tend to be duplicated about 30 times, and repetitive data processing (ibid.). The absence of one stop border posts for clearance means that two separate processes are conducted on either side of the border post (African Development Bank [The], 2012), which is both time and financially costly. Removing these diverse trade barriers is projected to create or boost diversification, intra-continental export opportunities, capital and investment flows and the competitiveness among firms across Africa (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa [The] et al., 2012).

Figure 7: Example of trade barriers

countries into regional blocks, with progression into a continental common market in line with the AU's objective (African Union [The], 2014d). The AU's idea is to address common development challenges, and deepen African integration and economic planning stepwise, starting regionally and ending at a continental level (World Bank [The], 2013b). However, the RECs *"have different rules, different sets of regulations [and they] vote differently across borders"* (Expert99, Male, International Financial Institution). This implies that the RECs have contradictory objectives, thereby undermining the prospects of a common African market.

The presence of *"different rules"* and *"regulations"* (Expert99, Male, International Financial Institution) within the RECs implies that these diverse communities can be opportunistic. To exemplify, there are cases where a country such as Zambia is both a *"COMESA and a SADC member [and] operates differently depending on where [it is] reading from"* (Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution). Such practices suggest that countries apply the most convenient rules, with the aim to get more benefits from trade transaction with others. Like defection in Prisoner's Dilemma, opportunistic practices erode mutual rewards over long-term and undermine the capacities of African nations to grow individually, and collectively as a continent. Arguably, it can be concluded that there is limited consciousness among African nations of the need to grow together and more equally as an economic entity. The diaspora further hints that non-collusive tendencies are partly due to that, *"our governments...are interested in quick fixes"* (Expert02, Male, Regional Development Institution). However *"quick fixes"* are characterised by a short-term orientation, and can be viewed as temporary solutions to economic growth. Evidently, this goes against the goal to achieve a more sustainable and equitable

socio-economic progress. Another expert provides the following account linked to the idea of “*quick fixes*” as follows:

“The problem is that the benefits of integration tend to be long term in nature, but the politicians who make the decisions always stay for a very short period. They have a short-term horizon of four years, five years ...So the politicians do not think about the long-term benefits. The politician is looking at what the integration might do to him and his region in the short-term... and when [they] do that [they] are more likely to come to a conclusion that it’s not in [their] interest in the short-term”
(Expert01, Male, International Development Institution).

Expert01 (Male, International Development Institution) implies that most African leaders tend to lack a long-term orientation and commitment to the achievement of a common good, given their short tenures – high political turnover (Axelrod, 2006). Political leaders face a trade-off between advancing their personal careers and the attainment of a common good. The inclination to seek maximisation of self-interests impels African leaders to focus on projects that potentially yield results for them within the given period of office. Such an approach is however at the expense of the ordinary Africans’ improvement of socio-economic circumstances. This is particularly problematic with a “*lame duck... a politician facing an end of career can be dangerous because of the increased temptation to seek private goals*” (Axelrod, 2006, p183). Nonetheless, globally and particularly in democratic places politicians have short tenures. Yet this aspect does not seem to have obstructed the establishment of the EU and its common market, to cite an example. A possible

Table 3: Economic Regional Communities (RECs)²⁰

REC	Member States	Established
CEN-SAD	Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Chad, Togo and Tunisia	1998
COMESA	Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe	1994
EAC	Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda	1967 (Re-est.: 2000)
ECCAS	Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Chad	1983
ECOWAS	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo	1975
IGAD	Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda	1996
SADC	Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe	1992
UMA	Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia	1989

²⁰Remarkably, some countries like Djibouti and Egypt have membership in two or more RECs, regardless of them potentially subscribing to contradictory principles.

explanation for the latter outcome is that ordinary citizens hold parties accountable for their members' actions (Axelrod, 2006). This civil engagement reduces the risk of egoistic leadership tendencies. By contrast, ordinary Africans appear to play a less active political role. To make the issue acute, most:

“African leaders are serving their self-interests. Their actions are interested in what they could get for themselves...[yet] they should be motivated to achieve sustainable development” (Expert55, Female, International Development Institution).

By inference, Expert55 (Female, International Development Institution) claims that the behaviour of the majority of African leaders does not show elements of altruism. By this, we presume that many of the leaders across the continent do not seem to have a *“willingness to consider”* the welfare of their people in their *“overall calculations of”* their *“interests”* as politicians (Piliavin and Charng, 1990, p.58). Altruism involves protecting and helping others, even if that act may entail loss of gains to the actor (Fehr and Fischbacher, 2003). Arguably, African leaders must be sacrificial and learn to help their people internally (rather than have outsiders provide aid). The diaspora and experts often describe political leadership in Africa as a means that is utilised by politicians for personal gains, instead of helping to improve the welfare of all Africans. The problem of pursuing self-interest operates at two national levels within the context of free trade and political accountability. Firstly, it diminishes leadership accountability to ordinary Africans, and secondly, it promotes corruption.

In general, “*Africa is full of corrupt leaders*” (Don, Male, AFD1, UK) who, by implication dishonestly employ their power for personal gains. One of the experts whose description of African leaders as lacking honesty has been cited in the previous chapter, goes on to explain that:

“The facilitators have hijacked the system for their sole benefit... they do not respect their people, the people who put them in power in the first instance...this is one reason they are not accountable” (Expert02, Male, Regional Development Institution).

Again, the concept of self-serving leadership resurfaces in Expert02’s assessment of African political leadership. The expert cited above suggests that in the main, African leadership does not seem ethical, signifying that it does not have moral principles on which to model and restrict its behaviour in consideration of other people’s needs (cf. Darwall, 1977). Based on the diasporan and expert standpoint, African leadership can generally be characterised as not having a disposition to consider other people’s needs and feelings in deciding how to act (cf. Darwall, 1977). Such neglect and the practice of seeking to maximise self-gains create problems like corruption. According to Transparent International’s (2013) corruption is rampant across Africa, with more than 35 of the 54 African states falling within the category of highly corrupt countries globally. Englebert (2000) further observes that corruption is marked by bribes and special payments to politicians and officials in exchange for protection of investments, property rights and trade licences among other factors. Both power and corruption are key to the accumulation of personal wealth by most African leaders (Ake, 1996). The diaspora further regards corruption

as a means for the leaders to stay in power, *“because the ones who have power are afraid to lose it, and they want to keep it no matter what”* (Diana, Female, AFD2, Sweden). Consequently, they adopt corrupt ways of meeting their ends (Ake, 1996). Nonetheless the prevalence of corruption hinders not only a more equitable distribution of resources, but also, the removal of trade barriers.

Experts also reveal that in addition to the lack of political commitment, and corrupt leadership tendencies, a complex fear among African governments represents another impediment to economic integration. To exemplify, Expert01 (Male, International Development Institution) provides the following insights:

“Well... you have different countries. Some are big some are small. Now the small countries are afraid that if they open up their economies by taking away those barriers, the big countries will dominate them. Because if a small country removes tariffs, there is a possibility that the big country would produce the good, export it to the small country and then the manufacturing firms in the same country may not be able to compete so they will all go bankrupt. So from a small country’s point of view, there is fear of domination” (Expert01, Male, International Development Institution).

Expert01 (Male, International Development Institution) reveals that some African countries feel threatened by the possibility of what Expert66 (Male, International Development Institution) more concretely describes as *“stiffer competition for their infant and domestic industries.”* There is also fear of *“potential loss of revenue”*

(Expert99, Male, International Financial Institution), given that some countries derive massive *“revenue from customs duty and taxation”* (Expert99, Male, International Financial Institution). Expert66 (Male, International Development Institution) also notes that countries *“fear the influx of migrants”* from poorer economic regions. The concept of fear suggests that countries may consider the establishment of a common market to be risky. Countries may also lack trust in the equity of economic integration, especially when assessed on the fairness of the distribution of the benefits accrued. Therefore, the value of economic integration appears to be questionable to some countries, resulting in the continuation of protectionist measures. It can be argued therefore that: a willingness to take risks; a sacrificial approach; trust and believing in the system, and; regulations that ensure fair distribution of the benefits of a common market and free trade zone are crucial to Africa’s economic union.

It is also noteworthy, that the African diaspora shares the view that the lack of a common currency is an impediment to increased intra African trade. The diaspora believes that economic union demands the following mechanisms:

“Africans need only a United Africa for Africans by forming a centralized bank for all of Africa, thereby in essence creating a United States of African Republics, under one currency” (Mas, Male, AFD1, USA).

Like the majority of diasporan members, Mas (Male, AFD1, USA) appeals for the formation of two key African institutions namely a central government and central

bank. The bank should be in charge of administering a common currency, and thus to some extent, formulating and implementing monetary and fiscal policies for the whole continent. A common currency is particularly favoured by the diaspora, as:

“It is good to have an African currency that you can pay with wherever you go in Africa. I mean the same approach like in US, we pay with the Dollar in every federal state. It is the same here [in the EU], you don’t need to worry about currency in every country you visit... It is expensive for international business people to keep trading currencies in Africa. The [exchange] rates and charges are messy” (Mia, Female, AFD2, France).

Mia (Female, AFD2, France) draws attention to the high cost of exchanging currencies across Africa. She hints that the exchange rates and charges also lack transparency. Therefore, the adoption of a single African currency would remove the costs of currency conversion. Indeed, the practical advantages of a common currency can be observed in the cases of the EU and USA. A common currency promotes the mobility of factors of production and internal trade. Also a common currency and policy framework are symbolic of unity, although such social value can be debated across member states (e.g. the UK and its British Pound). Paradoxically, experts believe that the lack of intra African trade and factor mobility makes the introduction of a single African currency rather ‘purposeless’ (while the diaspora holds the view that a common currency will promote continental trade). Expert99 (Male, International Financial Institution) aptly describes the challenge as follows:

“If you look at after the Second World War, in Europe, a single currency follows after trade. But in Africa, how much trade are they doing with themselves, about [12]% or less than [12]% or so... What is the purpose of a common currency if you cannot trade amongst yourselves, if you don’t have capital mobility, if people cannot move and go and work from one country to another... if investment is restricted?” (Expert99, Male, International Financial Institution).

Expert33 (Male, International Financial Institution) proceeds to note that *“one currency is complex”* and almost impossible to implement across continent for the main reason that African economies are diverse:

“For example you cannot have hyperinflation, one country cannot have an inflation rate of 5% another has 20%. If you have such divergences in terms of macro indicators, it’s very difficult for all the countries to come together and have one currency because it is going to lead to currency crisis...” (Expert01, Male, International Development Institution).

Expert01 (Male, International Development Institution) hints that the adoption of a single currency requires the adjustment of macro-economies policies, which would be challenging and costly for the majority of African countries. As can be learned from the EU experience, there has to be a parity of macro-economic policies, in order to allow the currency to be effective without distorting the value of each national economy (e.g. GDP). This is too risky and costly particularly for better performers, who will have to modify their economic policies in order to assimilate

their less competitive partners. Expert66 (Male, International Development Institution) presents this assumption as follows:

“For stronger economies a common currency could also mean that their current condition will have to be adjusted and assessed as has become the case in the Euro zone. There seems to exist an inevitable contagion in the performance of the EURO. The misfortunes of Greece must affect the stronger Euro zone economies to sustain and cushion the Hellenic national economy. African economies will take long to attain that state of mutual economic guardianship” (Expert66, Male, International Development Institution).

Expert66’s (Male, International Development Institution) reference to “*mutual economic guardianship*” refocuses our attention on the notion of altruism as discussed further above. The development practitioner confirms that concern for others and solidarity are key to sustainable economic cooperation. However altruistic behaviour is an aspect that mainly appears to remain absent from the African leadership approach and intra continental interactions. It is also noteworthy that apart from macro-economic challenges, the adoption of a common currency may be impaired by national pride. Countries, particularly among the strongest economic performers may not be willing to eliminate their national currencies, as the latter may have a very strongly felt symbolic relevance. For instance countries like the UK insist on maintaining their currencies as a manifestation of their autonomy and national identities.

“It’s not easy to eliminate the currencies at national level. It involves emotions. People have an emotional attachment to national currencies as a symbol of national sovereignty. You see what I mean. So for some countries it is difficult. Even in Europe, you can see the United Kingdom, one of the reasons they are not part of the euro is that they don’t want to lose control over certain things considered British like the pound and so on and so forth” (Expert01, Male, International Development Institution).

The concept of emotional attachment to national currency that we extract from Expert01’s (Male, International Development Institution) account implies that individuals have to collectively embrace a continental currency, and appreciate its role in facilitating their socio-economic progress. In the main however, our analysis suggests that it is not the absence of a common currency per se, which hinders economic co-operation among African countries. Rather, economic integration appears to be hampered by trade barriers, lack of compliance with AU’s trade policies (which are created by heads of States who seem to have distinct agendas, as reflected by non-compliance) and most significantly, the poor quality of African leadership as revealed by both the diaspora and experts. Similar to political harmony, economic integration needs an effective leadership that shows commitment to the common goal of sustainable development, rather than serving self-interests to maximise personal gains.

8.3. Education and skills

The African diaspora online assesses the education and skills acquired by Africans as being of low and inferior quality, and therefore a drawback to Africans' capacity to realise projects and activities necessary for socio-economic growth. The diasporan individuals share the sentiment that, *"poor education is indeed an issue, for more reasons than one"* (Carl, Male, AFD1, USA) across the continent. One of the diasporan members exemplifies the reasons as follows:

"I believe the issue in Africa is that the education available often serves as a basis for the education chosen and therefore knowledge sought. However, that available knowledge does not seem to have been that beneficial to Africans" (Alan, Male, AFD1, USA).

While generally individuals, particularly at college and university levels, tend to choose courses or subjects offered by the education systems in a given country and based on their interests, Alan (Male, AFD1, USA) hints that the 'African' education system is limited in scope. The knowledge potentially produced by the system is of limited value to African students with regards to its application to improve their lives. There are essential subjects such as languages, mathematics and sciences that nurture individuals' critical thinking, comprehension of complex phenomena, self-expression and communication among others (Doyle, 1994). However, the diaspora holds the view, as aptly expressed by one of the individuals, that *"if the education gained doesn't help to better your life, then it's useless"* (Neil, Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA). For instance, the acquired knowledge and skills would be valuable to

Africans if they could utilise it for entrepreneurship. Another member expresses this claim elaborately as follows:

“There are too many ways for people to make money in Africa, which is why the Chinese are going there in droves. They go there and open up businesses and are successful. There’s no reason why Africans can’t and shouldn’t be doing the same. These people just need to be steered towards that type of thinking, something they’re not getting from their societies’ educational institutions from what I can see” (Carl, Male, AFD1, USA).

Carl (Male, AFD1, USA) implies that the capacity to identify viable entrepreneurial opportunities derives from education. He draws a link between knowledge and wealth creation to reinforce that, the *“education available”* (Alan, Male, AFD1, USA) does not adequately prepare Africans to ‘think outside the box’. From a diasporan perspective, what the majority of African students learn and know (cf. Doyle, 1994) is limited in terms of equipping them to think innovatively and spot business opportunities available locally. Instead, outsiders such as the Chinese business people among other foreign investors exploit the numerous entrepreneurial opportunities. Furthermore, the African diaspora maintains that the education acquired by Africans has to be based on their developmental needs. The members’ view the acquisition of a needs relevant knowledge as a process that should start in the early years of schooling. For example Sam (Male, AFD1, USA) states that, *“African children should have an education that revolves around their needs”* (Sam, Male, AFD1, USA). The same diasporan member further elaborates as follows:

“If Africans are to progress they need to adopt an education model that attends to their unique needs. [A model called] The African Centred Education (ACE)... like any other educational system it must begin from the Kindergarten level and continue all the way toward the University level... Basically, instead of [merely] learning math, science, and social studies ... [African] children must be taught in a way that uses those subjects to answer the question; 'What must ... they do [in] today's society in order to advance themselves?' (Sam; also see appendix 7 for an explanation on ACE).

Sam (Male, AFD1, USA) draws our attention to the concept of applied knowledge, by opining that the ‘African’ education system should address Africans’ development requirements. Acquired knowledge should be interpreted and applied in the real world (Lynton and Elman, 1987) to solve the problem of underdevelopment across the continent of Africa. This signifies that, education is only valuable to Africans if it capacitates them to innovate ways for tackling poverty and improve their welfare on a long-term basis. Consequently, priorities should be given to the enhancement of knowledge and skills in areas that have a direct impact on improving Africans’ welfare. Carl (Male, AFD1, USA) clarifies as follows:

“Schools are important, but will only be beneficial if they produce people that will contribute to African growth by ensuring food security, increasing per capita GDP and political stability, as well as intelligence

gathering to further technological and science advancement especially in the arenas of health/medicine and research” (Carl, Male, AFD1, USA).

In reiterating the importance of applied knowledge in equipping Africans with competencies for work and life, Carl (Male, AFD1, USA) explains for instance that schools should impart knowledge key in securing enough food supplies, suggesting that schools should focus on crop and agricultural sciences and praxis. He also identifies the need to fulfil Africans’ medical needs as a target that African education should help to accomplish. Furthermore, Carl assesses the value of Africa’s education system to the continental citizens as based on the capacity to promote political stability. Evidence abounds globally, that a relatively better educated social collective is more likely to engage in dialogue, and think through solutions to conflicts without immediately initiating civil wars. Also, an educated populace is not easily vulnerable to political deceit or manipulation that may eventually result in instability. Instead, it is more likely to make informed political decisions within the context of elections among other political choices. Hence from a diasporan perspective, the ‘African’ education system can only add value to Africans’ lives, if it serves as a platform for addressing a range of intertwined socio-economic issues, and facilitating the generation of potential solutions to the problem of underdevelopment. In alignment with the other diasporan members, Wally (Male, AFD1, USA) furthers articulates that:

“If you are in a country with food issues you need agricultural scientists, bio-chemists and hydro engineers... If you're in a country battling health problems you need doctors, biologists, surgeons and other health

practitioners... studies should be centered around these” (Wally, Male, AFD1, USA).

Wally’s (Male, AFD1, USA) standpoint pertains to the concept of human capital—defined as knowledge, skills and competency endowments (Schultz, 1961). He underscores the significance of investing in developing a human capital for specifically meeting the development challenges confronting Africans. Human capital determines the scope, efficiency, and effectiveness of the socio-economic activities undertaken by Africans within the context of sustainable development (cf. Schultz, 1961). The diasporan view suggests that the value of African human capital is depicted by its utilisation in, and impact upon enabling the continent’s progressive transformation. By inference, it is also the lack of human capital relevant to Africans’ sustainable development needs, which limits the people’s role and impact in effectively transforming their living standards (we argue that ‘also’ in view of other factors such as lack of integration). It is the set of skills and competencies possessed by the people, which allow them to become entrepreneurs, and a more productive labour force. Therefore, the continent’s human capital has to be both leveraged and needs-based. A needs-based human capital would “*satisfy the essential*” growth “*requirements of*” all African citizens “*within the time horizon of [a] generation*” and beyond (cf. Lisk 1977, p.185).

To support the diasporan evaluation, Lisk (1977) notes that African countries have significantly expanded their education system but without meaningful gains in the improvement of citizens’ lives. This is in part due to a persistent mismatch between acquired knowledge and skills (human capital), and employment and entrepreneurial

requirements for a sustainable and more equitable growth (Gyimah-Brempong et al., 2006). For example, African *“universities are not always in touch with what the private sector needs, so degrees are not always useful in the job market”* (World Bank [The], 2014b). Graduates are disproportionately concentrated in the arts and humanities field, with an enormous deficit of qualifications in sciences (Colcolough, 1989). However, science and technology should ensure that the largest share of *“everything that Africa needs [is] made by Africans”* (Sam, Male, AFD1, USA). To illustrate:

“We need home grown large and small sized businesses to prosper... home grown investment that will not leave as soon as it’s time to pick up the rising labour cost bill” (Zola, Male, AFD1, China).

Such entrepreneurial initiatives as described above depend on the *“highly skilled African”* (Zola, Male, AFD1, China). The same diasporan member points to the competitive and rather temporary nature of FDI, particularly now when globalisation is making it increasingly easy for investors to relocate. More importantly, Zola (Male, AFD1, China) reveals that collectively, educated and skilled Africans are an asset to the continent, as Africa is their *“home”*, and they can contribute to socio-economic growth through sustainable business initiatives (if educated and trained for such purposes). Another development practitioner confirms that:

“The quality of education should capacitate people in terms of vocational training for them to be job ready, and to become entrepreneurs” (Expert33, Male, International Financial Institution).

A “*job ready*” (Expert33, Male, International Financial Institution) group of Africans is comprised of individuals who have acquired the essential skills to join corporations (the public sector) and the public sector, and generate value. While Africa’s sustainable progress should be internally driven, it does not mean that the continent “*should be closed to outside investment*” (Zola, Male, AFD1, China). Africa is not an island. Global trends also indicate that no place can grow entirely by itself without international investment. Hence the continent needs qualified human resources to attract FDI. As one of the development practitioners claims: “*We need people who will be trained in the country, so that foreign direct investment can come*” (Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution). International investors are often lured by the quality of education and skills of the human resources available on the ground (Moore and Daday, 2010). Such dimensions signal lower risks and costs, and ultimately competitive business prospects. Attracting FDI into the continent represents one of the ways by which the pace and quality of industrialisation can be improved. Nonetheless, an internal orientation to sustainable develop implies that the continent should avoid heavy dependence on foreign investment as the principal answer to Africa’s poverty. Therefore, building entrepreneurial capacity should be on top of the transformation agenda. Entrepreneurs are key actors within the private sector as the engine of economic growth.

Furthermore, one of the expert views is that “*education is every African’s human right*” (Expert77, Female, International Development Institution), meaning that “*education should be for all citizens of the African continent*” (Expert44, Female,

International Development Institution). Moreover, if we view Africa's sustainable development as a collectively and internally process, it becomes mandatory to equip all Africans with the relevant education and skills. At the most elementary level, there is a need to allow Africans to progress from a position where they 'understand home and its needs better than outsiders' to one where they start engaging with ways to tackle poverty through mass literacy. Another expert illuminates as follows:

"We need mass literacy to empower people at the bottom. We have the raw manpower in the bottom of the pyramid, which makes things go.... We need to educate all these groups and invest in them" (Expert02, Male, Regional Development Institution).

African women and youth are concentrated in the *"bottom of the pyramid"* (Expert02, Male, Regional Development Institution), where a lot of manual work is carried out (e.g. the agricultural sector). The continent's challenge is however that, the same demographics have limited access to education, in particular girls. According to the Brookings Institute Africa Learning Barometer, within the period 2000 and 2025:

"[Half of the] 128 million school-aged children... will have the opportunity to attend school and learn basic skills... 17 million will never go to school... [and] 37 million will not learn basic skills..." (van Fleet, 2012).

Among the children who acquire basic skills only (and have no access to tertiary education), more girls than boys are likely to drop out (UNDP, 2013). Therefore, the African education system is not only poor, but also less inclusive. The lack of access to education among girls is evidently a barrier to sustainable development. It reduces women (and girls') productivity and access to, as well as utilisation of, socio-economic opportunities. The diaspora unmask these issues through comparisons of Africa with other places, although smaller in scale than the former. For instance, Mia (Female, AFD2, France) recounts the benefits of an inclusive education system as follows:

“If you want to understand the power of education and skills in development, you only need to look at countries like Norway or Finland, or even the USA, even though acquiring education there can be too expensive for some demographics... but the point is, countries that prioritise education for all their citizens are among the most developed in the world” (Mia, Female, AFD2, France).

Mia accurately observes that Norway has an inclusive education approach, and is ranked as highly competitive in the OECD's (2014) Better Life Index. Norway has an average life expectancy of 81 years – contrary to 58 years average for Africa in 2012 (World Health Organization [The], 2014b) – and 82% of its adults have the equivalent of a high school degree, with no variation between men and women, except that girls tend to outperform boys in school (ibid.). These trends are in sharp contrast with Africa, where for example about 38% of the adults are illiterate (of which 2/3 are women) and more than 50% of the parents cannot assist their children

with homework (UNESCO, 2014). The emulation of education and training trends observable in Norway potentially brings Africa closer to a more inclusive and equitable socio-economic growth that it needs. In addition to poor access to, and poor quality of, education, another diasporan member currently visiting one of the African countries describes its leadership as failing to promote human capital development. Sharing his views online as well, the member exemplifies as follows:

“In the country where I am writing from government spends more on travel expenses of politicians than on education... 81.6 percent of children failed their 2012 Ordinary Level examinations... [for] the mother tongue for the majority of the candidates, the pass rate was only 18%. The pass rate in English was 20% but only 13% for maths. The decline in quality of education was due to a lack of teaching and lack of sufficient learning materials” (Ben, Male, Germany, AFD1).

Ben (Male, Germany, AFD1) implies that more broadly, misplaced government priorities are a hindrance to sustainable development. Budget allocations to travelling rather than investment in education result in a shortage of teaching resources such as teachers and material. This ultimately leads to high failure rates, thereby trapping Africans in the knowledge and skills gap, and incapacity to turnaround their lives. African leaders must have a *“vision to educate all their people... leadership must be pro education”* (Expert11), in order to intellectually and skilfully empower Africans to drive sustainable development through locally and jointly undertaken initiatives.

8.4. Critical place factors: Linkage to corporate branding

Marketing scholars stress corporate leadership, integration, and employee knowledge and skills (intellectual capital) as crucial to the competitiveness of particularly a service-oriented organisation where internal members are at the core of the value creation process (e.g. Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006). The same dimensions have emerged from our analysis as the critical factors for promoting sustainable development across Africa (as graphically summarised in figure 8 further below). Marketing scholars also underscore that great corporate service brands have great people and great leaders behind them (e.g. de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001; Ind, 2007). Leaders of such brands are visionary initiators who define the corporate brand strategy and create a culture, which allows the extraction of values that guide employees' behaviours and the direction of the organisation (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Hatch and Schultz, 2003). The challenge for the leaders of a service organisation is to create an 'excellent' corporate culture that fosters employee identification with the brand, leverages employee brand knowledge and skills and offers a competitive incentives' system (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006).

Our analysis of the critical factors for sustainable development suggests that the role of African leadership should consist of the same tasks that are undertaken by the top management of a corporate services brand (as briefly outlined above). Ideally and from a branding perspective, the main task of African leadership should revolve around boosting the attractiveness of *brand Africa*. Leaders contribute to the *brand's* lucrativeness through their qualities, and promotion of continental integration as well as human capital development (ordinary people's acquisition of the relevant

knowledge, skills and competencies). With regards to the central issue of integration, researchers stress that the competitive nature of contemporary markets demands that an organisation operates with “*an integrated logic*”, that is, corporate coherence (Hambrick, 1997, p.24). Corporate coherence reflects an organisation’s “*unity of purpose*” and “*unity of action*” (Hambrick, 1997, p.24). On one hand, “*unity of purpose*” resembles the objectives that the entire organisation seeks to accomplish regardless of the complexity of its business units and their dispersion globally (e.g. the Virgin Group). On the other hand, “*unity of action*” signifies a component of the corporate strategy adopted by an organisation in order to attain specified objectives. However, corporate coherence does not prescribe that businesses should look and act the same way (Hambrick, 1997). Rather, they must support and reinforce each other to create synergies in technology sharing and umbrella branding, interalia (ibid.). Applied to Africa’s context, the idea is therefore that African nations have the possibility to strategically pursue a common objective as a collective without losing their autonomy and unique (competitive national) features. The challenge however may relate to the potential strategy for collaboration.

The productivity with which an organisation utilises its resources depends on the choice of its corporate strategy and business organisation within the parameters of the market and technological environments (Caves, 1980). According to the same scholar (1980):

“Business organisation is concerned with assigning responsibilities to persons and evaluating, and rewarding their performance-matters that turn on individuals' optimising behaviour” (Caves, 1980, p.88).

From Porter's (1987) perspective, business organisation comprises of the allocation of resources and responsibilities to diverse business units belonging to an organisation (Porter, 1987). An organisation must therefore choose a corporate strategy and a format of business organisation that enables not only integration (Porter, 1987), but also value generation.

We hold the strong conviction that the same business logic as described above, can be applied to supranational entities such as Africa within the context of sustainable development. In combination, collective actions and their role in the (more optimal) utilisation of natural resources are key to sustainable development. We maintain in line with scholars in marketing and corporate strategy fields that the development impact of Africans' collective actions and natural resources will depend on how the two factors are organised. We presume that Africans are likely to be more effective in sustainable development if they adopt a strategy that allows 'business units' (e.g. African countries/economic sectors) to share activities of the value chain and exchange knowledge and skills (cf. Porter, 1987). The sharing of value chain activities and transferring of knowledge and skill across current business units are crucial to overall organisational competitiveness (ibid.).

Translated to Africa, the above stated underpinnings suggest that the AU can be conceived of as the facilitator of business organisation. For instance based on consensus within the institution, the AU should effectively assume the responsibility of allocating socio-economic tasks, specialisations and rewards to nations. Moreover, a corporate strategy should exploit interrelationships between business

units, and thereby maximise value creation (Porter, 1987). Applying this reasoning to the context of Africa underlines the significance of identifying connections among African economies, markets and informal sectors in order to utilise them more optimally in a coherent fashion.

Our evaluation of the research findings has cast a spotlight on the role of African leadership in shaping the factors crucial to Africa's sustainable and more equitable socio-economic growth. Leadership creates and oversees the implementation of policies and initiatives, promotes integration as a means to increased cooperation for allowing growth, and invest in human capital development. Our analysis has also addressed the issue of fragmentation among African leaders. Organisations tend to face similar leadership challenges. However, marketing and strategy scholars demonstrate how such issues can be tackled. For instance, Hambrick (1997) maintains that in more complex organisations, the extent to which members of a top management team like each other or the group can be viewed as having little significance: "*What matters is the degree to which they do things and process things collectively...*" (p.27). Crucial to cooperation is the degree to which top management shares "*information, resources, and decisions*" (Hambrick, 1997, p.26). We strongly believe that the same logic can be extended to Africa's leadership and continental integration.

Marketing scholars and practitioners aptly observe that a corporate service brand cannot send a coherent and effective brand message to outsiders, unless the brand itself is coherent. Internal coherence is reflected by the unification of the people within the organisation. In the case of Africa, internal cohesion has the potential to

boost economic growth. To offer a conclusive statement, Porter (1987) stresses that the effectiveness of a corporate strategy in attaining corporate objectives requires “*a strong sense of corporate identity, a clear corporate mission statement that emphasizes the importance of integrating business unit strategies, [and] an incentive system*” (p.8). These dimensions are defined by top management, which also ensures the realisation of the respective features (ibid.). Hence the role of leadership in leveraging the attractiveness of *brand Africa* and its impact upon sustainable

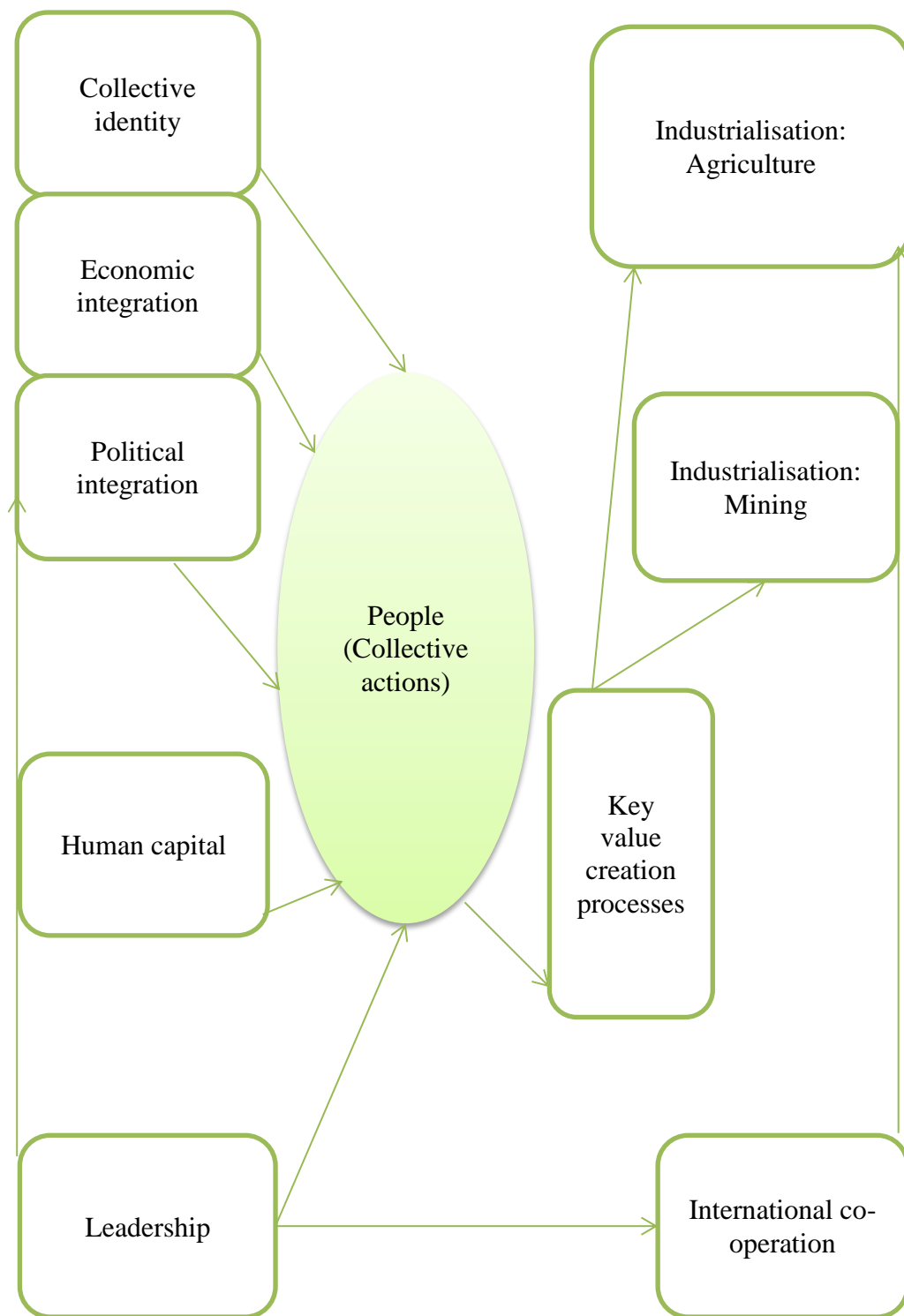


Figure 8: Supranational place brand and sustainable development – Critical factors

8.5. Chapter summary

This chapter set out to analyse the critical factors that potentially empower Africans to drive their own development (and by implication, the perceived effectiveness of *brand Africa* in enabling sustainable development). Firstly the analysis has established that Africa's integration is crucial to the continent's capacity to transform itself from poverty to more satisfying standard of life across generations. African countries face the same set of development problems although in differing magnitude, simultaneously lacking the resources to address the issues. It has been argued that cooperation will allow Africans to develop common solutions at a continental level, increase intra African trade to allow economic growth, achieve economies of scale by pooling resources (and working together to find strategies for tackling underdevelopment), and strengthen their international influence. Secondly, the chapter has specified that the efforts to integrate Africa should be put into the fostering a collective continental identity. A Pan African identity has the potential to establish individuals' sense of belonging to a larger collective with similar needs, goals and dreams. Members of the African diaspora online regard a collective identity as the bedrock of sustained economic cooperation among African nations. The promotion of a collective consciousness is deemed vital particularly for a continent typified by social conflicts and millions of ethnic tribes.

The chapter has also discussed the perceived challenges to Africa's socio-economic unity. Three of the main challenges have emerged as: an apparent lack of appreciation of the benefits of integration among Africans on the ground; an infrastructural deficit which restricts the movement of people, goods, capital resources and services, and therefore the forging of links among people; sustained trade barriers due to several

issues such as national fear for the collapse of domestic industries due to increased competition, and failure/unwillingness of nations to implement trade agreements set by RECs and the AU. Another key challenge has been identified as chiefly a leadership issue. Both the diaspora and leaders have revealed that the African Union has so far played a less effective institutional role in promoting Africa's integration, despite this being the Union's mission. In the main, the chapter has documented that there is fragmentation within the AU as well as lack of member alignment with the institutions' objectives and regulations. It has also been noted that the AU is comprised of national leaders, who themselves have been featured as tending to represent a barrier to Africa sustainable development. The diasporan and expert's views evaluated in this chapter, have produced a characterisation of African leaders as predominantly: short-term oriented; corrupt and lacking accountability to their people; egoistic and therefore failing to display altruistic tendencies in their leadership, and as a result; appearing to lack commitment to internal integration and their national as well as continental's sustainable socio-economic growth. Democracy, accountability to ordinary citizens, exemplary behaviours, strategic vision and commitment have been noted as the key leadership qualities that can empower African leaders to enable Africans to drive sustainable development internally.

Moving from the theme of continental unity, the chapter has raised an argument for an education centred on Africans' development needs. This diasporan view has stemmed from the perception that the education across Africa fails to impart applied knowledge to Africans. A valuable education system should build Africans' knowledge, skills and competencies for work (and life in general). Essentially, all Africans should have access to education, and be able to apply the acquired knowledge in the real world to

find ways to solve the problem of underdevelopment. Diasporan views on education, skills and competencies have brought the concept of human capital into the limelight. Apparently, the lack of human capital across Africa represents another barrier to the continent's sustainable development. Human capital allows Africans to 'think outside the box' and become more effective in their choice and implementation of socio-economic activities that lead to poverty elimination. It has also been noted that, African leadership has so far played a rather insufficient role in the development of human capital relevant to Africa's sustainable and more equitable growth requirements.

In relating our findings to marketing, the chapter has claimed that great corporate service brands have great people and great leaders behind them. Leadership is however more critical in boosting the attractiveness (or competitiveness) of the brand, by way of creating and fostering a conducive (or excellent) corporate culture. We have utilised this argument to assert that African leaders face the task of turning *brand Africa* into an attractive international market player, through their qualities and input, as well as efficacy and commitment pertaining to continental integration and human capital development (especially ordinary people's acquisition of the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies).

9. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

“Brands are certainly aspirational, and a really strong brand makes customers overlook or rationalise the negative sides of the brand” (van Ham, 2002; p.262).

9.1. Overview of key research findings

Our research set out to establish the extent to which the corporate branding paradigm can be employed to conceptualise a supranational entity such as *brand Africa*. In highlighting the significance of our investigation, the thesis has begun by pointing to an apparent lack of published work that scientifically explains the establishment of a complex construct like *brand Africa* and its potential value to specific stakeholders. Categorising *brand Africa* under place branding, the literature review has underscored the reliance of place branding theory and praxis on the general ‘fundamentals’ of corporate branding. The observed tendency among studies is to ‘merely’ refer to the process by which corporations are branded as a model for all place brands, without seeming to pay attention to the distinctions that arise between goods and service oriented organisations. The meaning and value of a corporate goods brand (e.g. Apple) revolves around the tangible products, contrary to the case of a corporate service brand (e.g. British Airways). For the corporate service brand, organisational members/employees are pivotal to the evolution of the brand and its meaning. From an outsider perspective, the employees create and represent the brand, and generate a substantial part of the brand value during interactions with consumers and other brand interest groups. In particular, the corporate brand values of a service organisation are extracted from how employees conduct themselves at brand contact points.

Taking into account the observations stated above, we have formulated our main research question as: ‘To what extent can the corporate branding paradigm be applied to a continent?’ The analysis has further underlined that firstly, brands generate socio-economic value for diverse stakeholders – In other words, brands should create value for them to attain legitimacy in the marketplace as ‘brands’ (as reviewed in Chapter 2). Secondly, the value of a place brand lies in its contribution to development (as discussed in Chapter 3). Therefore, the research has further asked: ‘How does *brand Africa* facilitate sustainable development – what are the critical factors?’ It has been argued that Africa represents a crucial case for analysis given its level of impoverishment and scholarly interest in the continent’s image (which however tends to be loosely equated to the brand despite it being a mere facet of the latter).

The study has proceeded by a case analysis of *brand Africa* drawing upon the definition of brands as meanings created and attributed to entities by social actors, in order (for the entities) to serve specific socio-economic purposes. Utilising netnography to explore the meaning of the construct Africa from a diasporan perspective, Chapter 6 has discovered the concept to be people centric. The construct Africa represents an amalgam of ideas about what Africans do collectively (their perceived collective actions) within a global context, as evaluated by outsiders. The chapter has therefore postulated that *brand Africa* is a people centric concept, and its abstraction resembles the definition of a corporate service brand. An assertion has also been advanced that the attractiveness of *brand Africa* depends on the collective actions undertaken on the continent, and as evaluated by perceivers. This is analogous how a corporate service brand is assessed. Our discovery has consequently permitted

us to set some conceptual boundaries between the two branding models – corporate service and corporate goods – in relation to a supranational place such as *Africa*.

Chapter 7 has addressed the first part of the question: ‘How does *brand Africa* facilitate sustainable development – what are the critical factors?’ Answering the ‘how’ part, the investigation has established that the inhabitants of a place drive their own sustainable development. This signifies that value generation is an internally driven process by the people and for the people (internal value orientation). The key value creation processes for sustainable development have been identified as the industrialisation of the agricultural and mining sectors, and Africa’s (as represented by the leaders) more active participation in international partnerships. Also, transformative and altruistic leadership has emerged as the main facilitator of sustainable development in multiple ways such as creating a conducive environment, empowering and inspiring people to ‘make great things happen’, and showing commitment to the process of permanently shifting Africa out of poverty. In evaluating our analysis from a corporate branding perspective, the research has utilised the concept of strategic resource management for value creation. We have contended that while *brand Africa* resembles a corporate service brand, the fundamentals of corporate strategic resource management are relevant to the ‘conglomerate’ Africa within the context of sustainable development. However people lie at the centre of all processes. Africans’ performances drive sustainable development in the same way that the activities undertaken by members of any given corporation boost competitiveness (e.g. innovation). The distinctive point however is that the role of Africans is not confined to innovation or lack of it, but also has an immensely significant impact on the supranational place brand (as a people centric

construct, analogous with a corporate service brand). People's complex role entails both place meaning making and value creation utilising the resources available across the continent.

Chapter 8 has inquired into the last part of the sub research question on what the critical factors for promoting sustainable development are. Continental integration, human capital development and leadership have been identified as the critical dimensions that capacitate Africans to internally drive their sustainable development. The need for Africans to embrace a continental identity (Pan African identity) has taken centre stage within the analysis. The chapter has contended that a collective identity is key to the much sought sustained economic interactions across Africa for the promotion of intra continental trade and economic growth. The several challenges interfering with Africa's capacity to transform its socio-economic situations have been associated with a leadership, which appears limited in many ways from a diasporan and expert viewpoint. Primarily, African leaders have been featured as tending to lack altruism and commitment to the continent's (or their nations') more equitable growth on a long-term basis. In linking our analysis to the corporate branding paradigm, we have drawn attention to the significance of corporate leadership, integration, and employee knowledge and skills (intellectual capital) to the competitiveness of a service organisation in particular. These features have surfaced from our analysis as key to Africa's progressive transformation. It has therefore been reiterated that African leaders face the same brand building challenges confronted by the leaders of a corporate service brand in strategically boosting competitiveness (i.e. leading the brand building process by facilitating integration and human/intellectual capital development).

To concretise the results of our analysis in a conclusive statement, Africans make Africa both metaphorically and physically through their collective actions. Africans are the ‘brand’ and drivers of sustainable development, and they require applied knowledge, skills and competencies, as well as committed leadership in order to transform their lives from poverty. The dimensions of corporate branding that may be applied to the conceptualisation and development of a supranational place *brand* like *Africa* are summarised in Table 4 below (based on the findings of our investigation). Also, we present a set of six tentative hypotheses extracted from our work as propositions in the same table.

9.2. Implications

The theoretical motivation behind this work has been a quest for knowledge on a how gigantic and diverse place such as Africa acquires the status of a brand. In order to scientifically guide the analysis, our research has raised the underlying question of the relationship between corporate branding and supranational place branding. Utilising the empirical findings, the work has contended that *brand Africa* fundamentally resembles a corporate service brand as a people centric construct. Consequently, the implications for theory and practice relate to people and leadership as subsequently analysed, in addition to the implications for the conception of sustainable development.

9.2.1. People

Internal brand building: Our research has established that akin to corporate service brands, the meaning of a supranational brand such as *Africa* revolves around the

Table 4: Corporate branding paradigm applied to a supranational place

Supranational place dimension	Propositions	Linkage to the corporate branding paradigm
<p><i>People as the core source of place meaning:</i></p> <p>Collective actions undertaken by the people within a given place signify something about the individuals, which becomes synonymous with what the place stands for. People make the place metaphorically through what they do as a social group.</p>	<p>A supranational place brand is a people centric construct – the brand’s core dimensions are enduring notions about what is known by outsiders about the people’s collective undertakings.</p>	<p><i>Corporate service brand:</i></p> <p>Members affiliated with an organisation and their behavioural practices as the brand from an outsider’s perspective.</p>
<p><i>Core source of brand value – Collective actions:</i></p> <p>What people do leads to certain achievements (or lack of these) as reflected by sustainable development, which itself is internally driven.</p>	<p>The attractiveness of a supranational place brand depends on the inhabitants’ collective actions.</p>	<p><i>Corporate service brand:</i></p> <p>Employee behaviours and performances are a key differentiation factor for organisations where the core product offering is intangible.</p>
<p><i>Orientation of value generation:</i></p> <p>Primarily value generation is internally driven and oriented. Ideally, inhabitants create value for their own benefit as a collective. A more inclusive and equitable distribution of value (e.g. wealth and resource dividends) is crucial.</p>	<p>The competitiveness of a supranational place brand is significantly influenced by collective ownership of the brand.</p>	<p><i>Corporate owners stakeholders/shareholders:</i></p> <p>In essence, value is generated for external parties across all corporations. In service organisations, employees are the main source of brand meaning, and they create value for others who are often the owners of the organisation, shareholders and customers. In general there is less equitable and inclusive access by employees to the financial value generated across all</p>

Supranational place dimension	Propositions	Linkage to the corporate branding paradigm
		corporations. Employee input is honoured through wages, salaries and other rewards.
<p>Role of leadership:</p> <p>Political leadership boosts the supranational place brand performance and attractiveness by shaping integration, human capital development and international collaboration. Leadership builds a conducive environment for the brand to drive sustainable development.</p>	<p>Altruistic political leadership is central to the competitive evolution of a supranational place brand. However other leadership qualities such as democratic, exemplary, visionary, empowering, inspiring and committed are also crucial.</p>	<p>For the <i>corporate service brand</i> leadership creates a conducive environment to promote the enactment of brand supportive behaviours. In general, corporate leadership does not necessarily have to be altruistic, as leaders are held accountable to their actions by formal structures controlled by shareholders and other stakeholders.</p>
<p>Features of the people:</p> <p>Place inhabitants are integrated and share a collective identity. The collective has a high level of education, skills and competencies (inclusive human capital development).</p>	<p>The competitiveness of a supranational place brand is fundamentally shaped by integration and inclusive human capital development.</p>	<p>Corporate service brand:</p> <p>Organisational members are unified around the brand values, and collectively view themselves as the ambassadors of the brand.</p>
<p>Strategic resource management:</p> <p>Political leadership (governments and regional institutions, e.g. the African Union) develop people-centric strategies, processes and policy initiatives to facilitate the conversion of resources into wealth for place inhabitants sustainably.</p>	<p>A supranational place requires a people centric strategic management of resources in order to promote sustainable development.</p>	<p>Corporate management team:</p> <p>Strategic resource management is crucial to all corporations seeking competitiveness, regardless of whether they are service or good orientated. However, people lie at the centre of all processes within service organisations.</p>

people. Their collective actions define the supranational brand in a process resembling the way employees represent a corporate service brand to external brand interest groups (e.g. customers). Employees are seen as the heart of the organisation, and thus its most valuable asset (Ind, 2007). Employees convey the corporate brand values through their behaviours during interaction with stakeholders (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005). Employees are also the individuals who translate the corporate brand strategy into tangible actions (Ind, 2007). Thus employees have a crucial role in generating value for customers and stakeholders (de Chernatony and Cottam, 2006). This also one of the main reason why service organisations commit investment into processes and structures that ensure brand consistent behaviours for minimising divergence between the brand promise and experience at all contact points (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001; Thomson et al., 1999).

The similarities identified between the role of a place's inhabitants and members of an organisation imply that any effort to create a competitive supranational place brand should be targeted at transforming or influencing collective actions. Brand building within a services organisation has an inside-out approach (Tosti and Stotz, 2001). Leaders (top management) adopt internal branding, which reflects an employee centric approach to brand building, typified by investment in training and fostering employee identification (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005). Training involves developing employees' knowledge and skills (increasing the organisation's intellectual capital) to promote their effectiveness and efficiency. This requirement is similarly significant within the context of *brand Africa* and sustainable development. Our work has argued that Africans need applied knowledge, skills and competencies that empower them to initiate and implement socio-economic activities linked to

poverty elimination (e.g. entrepreneurship, innovation and employment). We consequently conclude that the process of building an attractive *brand Africa* requires the adoption of internal branding focusing on all Africans across the continent.

Identification relates to the emotional bond between an employee and an organisation (which also implies identifying the self as a member of a collective), and an intrinsic motivation for the employee to support the corporate brand as its ambassador. The ambassadorial behaviours of employees outlined by marketing scholars include: helping each other to solve problems and considering each other's needs even at the cost of sacrificing one's own resources; enthusiasm as exemplified by being proactive in creating value; willingness to develop one's skills and knowledge, and; promoting the general welfare of the organisation. In essence, employees who identify with the organisation live the brand (cf. Burman and Zeplin, 2005; Ind, 2007; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005). Our study suggests that the magnitude and requirements of the task of attaining sustainable development across Africa calls for a set of behavioural 'changes' or dimensions that entail helpfulness, cooperativeness, thoughtfulness, self-development, resourcefulness, altruism and solidarity among place inhabitants. We therefore presume that the underpinnings of internal brand building are transferable to supranational place branding, with a particular focus on addressing internal cohesion and co-operation among citizens. Fostering identification along the guidelines supplied by the internal branding model potentially encourages ordinary Africans (and their African leaders) to regard each other as a unit. Our goal in promoting this perspective is however not to make a rather 'naïve' attempt at oversimplifying the problem of integration across a multidimensional supranational region such as Africa.

Instead, we aim to envision a possible transferability of a model tested in one setting to another with similar theoretical dimensions.

We further propound that factors which retard sustainable growth, such as internal fragmentation and civil conflicts across Africa, can be pacified when inhabitants (especially leaders) have a willingness to help and support one another, and consider the potential impact of their actions upon fellow citizens (cf. Burman and Zeplin, 2005). To reiterate, our assumptions are not designed to reduce the complexity of coordinating masses of people with different ambitions, goals, ethnical and cultural backgrounds, and encouraging them to move systematically in one direction. Indeed, our proposition acknowledges that harnessing citizens at a continental level reflects an enormous challenge. Misunderstandings and conflicts regarding key issues such as objectives, means to the goals, and roles played by each nation or by individual citizens are bound to surface across the continent. Similar conflicts and friction emerge within organisations and between organisational departments (Olins, 2008). However, corporate leaders engage employees in brand related discourses to facilitate an understanding of their views on corporate culture and identity, and utilise the insights for brand building, fostering a collective understanding of the brand (cf. Balmer, 1995 and 2001; Ind, 1997; Hatch et al., 2000) as well as winning their buy-in of the brand values (Thomson et al., 1999).

Translated to the case of a supranational region, the above stated assumptions suggest that a people centred approach to brand building starts at grassroots level, with a leadership that engages Africans in dialogue at community, national and international level. The identity of a competitive supranational entity such as a *brand Africa* should

be collectively constructed. Involving ordinary Africans may boost their sense of self-worth, thereby strengthening recognition of their accountability in securing Africa's sustainable and more equitable growth. The purpose of the grassroots engagement should be to tap citizens' understanding of who they are and aspire to be, based on their historical and environmental contexts. The ultimate goal should be to sell sustainable development as a shared ambition and responsibility of all Africans through appealing to their cognitions and emotions (cf. Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005).

The insights supplied by the African diasporan members online may point to a 'common' African culture possibly in the same sense that scholars may refer to a corporate Google, British Airways or Singapore Airlines' culture. Sharing a common culture is often regarded as a way to unite an organisation, although this may be very challenging to accomplish. For instance, the marketing group will often speak a different language from operations or finance departments (Ind, 1997). All these departments may behave in different ways resulting in own 'departmental' culture and potential clashes (ibid.). Where dialogue appears to have failed, organisations tend to utilise formal systems and processes to resolve conflicts. Nonetheless, dealing with social conflicts at a supranational place branding level may require a different approach (apart from the assumption that 'formal' procedures may be lacking or ineffective, e.g. in the case of African countries and the implementation of free trade agreements). For this reason, cultural diplomacy can be deployed as a key instrument for neutralising and taming social conflicts. Defined as the facilitation of the exchange of ideas and values (Thayer, 1959), cultural diplomacy may expose the diverse African citizens to the numerous continental norms, beliefs and behavioural standards

dispersed across the continent, while encouraging an appreciation of such diversity. In that manner, cultural diplomacy potentially promotes a stronger sense of collectiveness among Africans, and fosters regional integration. A range of basic tools for facilitating knowledge about other nations/ethnic groups, and interaction among the continental citizens may include academic exchange programmes, literature, sports, music, theatre and art, among others (cf. Arndt, 2005; Fosler-Lussier, 2012). These tools may be themed and organized around the values of a competitive *brand Africa* and its contribution to self-sustenance and progress of the African people.

A ‘permanent’ association between an individual and the place brand: In organisations, employees often have the option to dissociate themselves from the corporate service brand when prompted to do so. However, the case of *brand Africa* implies that the affixation of ‘African’ (possibly erroneously) to someone with a ‘dark skin pigment’ has a form of permanence that an individual cannot easily isolate from his/her identity –This has been revealed in chapter 6, where some diasporan members have expressed their disapproval with being labelled African. By implication, the ‘natural’ inhabitants of a place will always be associated with the respective place brand regardless of where the individuals relocate. For instance, an ‘African’ person will always be connected to *brand Africa*, unlike a former employee of a bank whose brand ambassadorial role and identification with the bank fades upon joining another organisation. This key difference underscores two points: I) the varying ‘durability’ of an individual’s identity irrespective of whether the person chooses to acknowledge his/her connection to any of the two entities or not, and the rather permanent role of individuals in defining a place brand, and; an individual’s constant awareness of his/her link to the place brand (if the linkage is viewed from a branding perspective),

as exemplified by the analysis of potential relationships between the African diaspora and its continent of origin.

The above stated points indicate that contrary to former employees of any given corporate service brand, diasporan individuals maintain (or are compelled to sustain) a connection to the supranational place brand. Consequently, the performance of the brand may be something of on-going concern to the individuals as exposed within this work (by some of the diasporan members). The involvement may also entail drawbacks/costs or advantages/benefits for the individuals in question, or not. The same sense of responsibility does not materialise, or is often not expected among former employees of a corporate service organisation, whose link with the brand will have been terminated (unless they leave the organisation for retirement, and in that case may still see themselves as 'old' members). The role and identification of the employees of a service organisation can be classified as contextual and therefore temporary, contrary to the context of a diasporan individual. Moreover, a connection between a diasporan individual and supranational place brand and can also be beneficial to both entities regardless of physical proximity between the person and the brand. For instance individuals may support the brand continuously in various socio-economic ways (e.g. investment or verbal endorsement). A competitive supranational place brand may boost an individuals' sense of identity despite the physical separation between the two entities.

Dual role of the people: Another difference between corporate service and place branding relates to the orientation of value generation. In service organisations employees play a key role as brand ambassadors. Employees are simultaneously an

internal brand interest group with needs, goals and desires. Employee contribution (or service to the organisations) is rewarded in financial, symbolic, and even emotional terms depending on how connected to the corporate brand they feel. However, their value generation is largely for other brand interest groups (e.g. shareholders and customers). Given this case, the rewards and incentives system are often designed to stimulate and encourage brand supportive behaviours consistently (Burmam and Zeplin, 2005; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005 and 2006). Likewise, the intricacy of a supranational place brand lies in the dual role of inhabitants as the brand and internal stakeholders simultaneously. Place inhabitants have needs, dreams and hopes that should be met by the resources available in the geographical entity, and by/or facilitated by political leaders. However, as opposed to a corporate service brand, value generation tends to have an internal focus in the case of supranational place branding. Citizens may be the brand, yet they are also (or should be seen as) the main beneficiaries of the value generation processes. We claim that this is particularly the case within the context of sustainable development. Also, resource endowments or revenues derived from such assets are ideally collectively owned by the people, as compared to corporations where only shareholders are legally identified as having the rights of ownership (however in rare cases, shareholders may also include employees). A place's citizens (should) benefit socio-culturally, environmentally and economically from the value they create. Apparently, the tendency among most of place branding initiatives is to adopt an outward orientation whereby a nation/place is branded to attract external resources. We argue, in line with our research findings that such an approach is useful, however the branding targets should be the local people as they are the ones who make the place. Particularly in the case of the current *brand*

Africa, the brand building approach would profit from addressing the needs and potential of the people on the ground.

9.2.2. Leadership

Broadly conceived, corporate brands are led and managed by individuals who ensure that the organisations create value for their owners and key brand interest groups. The leaders may be motivated extrinsically by incentives and formal structures that demand accountability to stakeholders. They may also be intrinsically driven by their personal values and commitment to the organisation. Corporate brand leaders may also be influenced by a combination of both extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Whichever way, they are still required to meet corporate objectives, and are held accountable for their outcomes or failure. In contrast, the political leadership associated with *brand Africa* (as analysed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8) does not seem to face the same pressure from citizens (as the ‘stakeholders’). Evidently, the leaders have more freedom and opportunities for exploiting public resources more frequently than in corporations. In the latter case, brand leaders are not likely to misuse the organisation’s resources without facing some serious consequences. For an individual, political leadership may operate as an end in itself (and for the individual), not a means to the end for a collective (e.g. to a collective outcome such as an integrated and more competitive *brand Africa*). The above stated observations and a lack of effective formal structures to punish self-serving leadership imply that a supranational place brand requires intrinsically driven and altruistic leaders more than a corporate service brand would. Similar to corporate service branding, leadership is critical to a supranational place brand. Brands may be socially constructed, but they need leaders to manage and commit resources in their construction in the first place. *Brand Africa* does not (yet)

have such leadership. However our analysis implies that the brand would benefit from a strategic management. A brand leadership is particularly vital for the creation of a supranational place brand vision and strategy, empowerment of ordinary citizens and coordination of their collective actions with the goal to accomplish both growth and branding objectives.

Creation of a continental brand vision and objectives: Within the domain of corporate branding, a shared corporate brand vision minimises fragmentation and the inconsistency of employees' brand related behaviours. The importance of a vision to place branding has been underscored in our literature review section. However we reinforce that a jointly created and powerful vision will strengthen *brand Africa's* contribution to sustainable development by primarily uniting the diverse African nations, and configuring them around goals linked to sustainable development. Akin to the case of an organisation, the impact of *brand Africa* vision will lie in "*its cohesion: the idea of people coming together and working towards a common goal*" (cf. Ind, 1997, p.2). A cohesive brand vision must therefore have a long-term orientation and the energy to unite ordinary Africans and their nations behind common goals. Such vision potentially provides both Africans and other stakeholders with clarity on what a competitive *brand Africa* should look like and achieve (cf. Balmer, 1995 and 2001; de Chernatony 1999, 2002 and 2010; Ind, 1997; Hatch et al., 2000).

Sustainable development is a long-term process demanding a supranational place brand vision with a long-term focus, and which transcends the interests of individual politicians. Notwithstanding, the short-term nature of political tenures creates tension

between the creation of a long-term supranational place brand vision and its implementation by leaders. This draws attention to the necessity of separating the roles of brand leadership from political leadership. In a way, the division of roles contrasts the praxis of corporate service branding where top management is also responsible for other aspects of the organisation linked to growth. Branding is indeed aspirational (van Ham, 2002). A researcher may as well speculate based on observing how brands that are led by great leadership transform societies (e.g. Holt, 2004), that a separate brand leadership team may just be ‘the’ powerful agent for sensitising African political leadership to their role in promoting *brand Africa*’s attractiveness and growth impact.

Addressing the question of who potentially constitutes a continental place brand leadership is instrumental to our fuller understanding of the team’s role. Literature on corporate branding proposes that a brand leadership team be comprised of multi-disciplinary professionals ranging from marketing and branding specialists, to graphic and web designers as well as sociologists (Olins, 2008). In addition to these experts, a supranational place brand may require individuals with a solid understanding of the historical, cultural and development aspects of the place in question (e.g. Africa). Diverse team members bring sets of unique skills and competencies, and knowledge into the brand building exercise (Olins, 2008).

Arguably, the uniting power of a potential *brand Africa* vision will lie in the meaning it holds for all Africans. An articulated *brand Africa* vision should be “*a true heartfelt belief that is fundamental*” to Africans and that “*steers everything*” they do (cf. Ind, 1997, p.11). The vision should inspire ordinary Africans and their political leaders to

find ways for proactively alleviating poverty, as well as live with one another in a more harmonised and socio-politically just society. The shared and profound ideology can be imagined from African's rich culture, "*energy and ingenuity*" and the "*continent's riches*", to borrow the Africa Progress Panel's terminology (2014). As established in the domain of corporate branding, an organisation's culture is usually a valuable, imperfectly imitable and rare asset. Hence an organisation utilises its culture as a source of brand identity and values, which provide a collective understanding of who/what the organisation is, as well as anchor and guide the behaviours of everyone within the organisation. Given these observations, we believe that the task for a supranational place brand leadership should be to filter through the elements of the 'African' culture, and isolate components that can be fed into a continental brand vision, identity and values. These dimensions must appeal to, and be embraced by, the inhabitants prior to selling the brand to the world.

Similar to the leadership of a corporate service brand, a supranational place brand management team must strive for a jointly established identity based on values that are appreciated and embraced by the place inhabitants (e.g. Africans). The brand values have to be relevant and authentic to the people (cf. Balmer, 1995 and 2001; de Chernatony and Cottam, 2006; Ind, 1997 and 2007; Hatch et al., 2000). This suggests that the supranational place brand values cannot be simply imposed upon the Africans. Instead, the values should be socially negotiated in order for them to be accepted by the place's inhabitants. To be more precise, the values of a managed *brand Africa* should be allowed to emerge from a collective understanding and negotiations of who Africans are, what their hopes, dreams and aspirations are, as well as what they should achieve as a unit. In this case, the brand leadership team's

challenge concerns minimising the introduction of values alien to the people. Marketing researchers note that some corporate service brands failed in the past due to the introduction of values that did not resonate with employees' 'social reality' (e.g. de Chernatony et al., 1999). In the case of *brand Africa*, conflict or alienation is likely to surface given the scope and diversity of the supranational region in question. Cultural fragmentation increases with the size and growth of an organisation (Ind, 2007; de Chernatony et al. 2011), with such divergence potentially undermining brand success (de Chernatony et al. 2011). Creating a supranational place brand identity and values should therefore be an inclusive process (cf. Balmer, 1995; Ind, 1997 and 2007; Hatch et al., 2000) in the same sense that sustainable development demands collective input. Together, a brand management team and ordinary citizens socially construct the core values of a more competitive *brand Africa*, which should then be reflected in the Africans' collective actions. However, this is not to underestimate the challenge of such an initiative to a continent that is already struggling to fund some of the crucial projects linked to food security and health care. An open question that cannot be easily dismissed pertains to where the continent will obtain the resources for the endeavour. Nonetheless, we assume that the issue goes back to the argument of optimising the value generation capacity of African natural and human resources as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

Building an umbrella continental place brand: A few countries like South Africa appear to pursue a strategy that isolates them from the rest of the continent (for example see, Brand South Africa 2014). Interestingly, the claim that such nation brands appear to push forth is roughly that 'we are not like the rest on the continent'. This is despite the observation that the typical problems affecting the entire continent

are prevalent and dispersed across Africa, albeit in varying degrees of intensity and acuteness. The ‘we are different from the rest’ lines of nation branding arguably reinforce notions about what Africa is. At the same time, nation brands may be competitive within the context of place of origin effects, e.g. South African wines. This however does not seem to have a significantly sustainable impact on the elimination of poverty across South Africa or any other nations trying to embrace the same strategy. Moreover, the inclination to homogenise Africa implies that generalisations of the ‘social reality’ characterising Africa are so entrenched among external audiences that they create immense challenges for individual nation brands to break through international markets and perform sustainably. The way the African region is understood, somewhat dictates that associations about *brand Africa* are evoked first, then nation brands, if at all. Our implication does not however presuppose the homogeneity of perceptions across social groups globally. Therefore, we contend that unless there is a massive transformation of perceptions of the collective economic, political and socio-cultural actions and statuses of the people across Sub Saharan Africa in particular, individual nation branding efforts may be futile. This observation can be extended to any mega place brand within the context of development, as such place appears to be defined more on the basis of what is ‘known’ about its inhabitants than any other dimensions.

A *brand Africa* leadership team will be required to facilitate collaboration among African nations in building a competitive umbrella brand. Such continental brand can then be utilised as a foundation for strengthening the ‘weak and vulnerable’ city and country brands into unique and competitive global market participants. A competitive *brand Africa* may also achieve economies of communication, in the sense that the

supranational and nation brands may endorse and add value to each other (cf. Ind, 1997). In the main, *brand Africa* leaders need to strive for a sustainable and jointly created competitive supranational brand that facilitates economic growth, environmental sustenance and social equality today and for the many African generations to come. However we maintain that a supranational brand management team should involve the citizens in the process of defining and understanding the brand. As van Ham (2002) notes, the role of the brand management team should be to inspire instead of control citizens. What is required is an inclusive approach to the building of *brand Africa*, and this calls attention to the practice of internal brand building as discussed further above.

9.2.3. Place branding and sustainable development

The implication we draw from our analysis is that, place branding represents a bottom up and inclusive process that revolves around the place's inhabitants in addressing their capacities and securing internal cohesion. This is however contrary to the common practice in corporate service branding, which is often driven by the mission and strategy articulated by top management. Sustainable development is the end sought by place branding, and inhabitants always lie at the centre of a place brand as both the subjects and drivers of such progress. The position of the inhabitants signifies that the sustainable development of a place reflects that of the inhabitants. Places develop sustainably through human actions, and to develop a place, leadership has to facilitate the transformation/effectiveness of the people's actions first.

Projects such as infrastructure development may be essential as means towards the development being pursued, yet it is the inhabitants who determine the fate of such

infrastructure on a long-term basis. In the short-term, architects and civil engineers will design and build physical capital. However, ordinary citizens will participate in the usage and maintenance or even destruction of the infrastructure with time. In the least sense, ordinary citizens keep their roads, buildings and cities clean if they collectively appreciate and value the appearance of their habitat. The difference between Lagos and London may be partly due to how the people treat their cities, whether through law enforcement – which is institutionalised by people – or a sense of accountability that citizens learn to assimilate. Hence, as means to this end, and from a place branding perspective, sustainable development becomes a process that entails the transformation of people's behaviours, and ensuring that leadership behaviour is equally consistent with, and supportive of development objectives. The sustainable progress of a place should therefore be conceived of as a long-term project of influencing what people do within the socio-economic and political spheres, and how they relate to one another in order to improve their well-being.

A people centric approach to sustainable development is deemed valuable to how the latter is implemented. Development researchers and practitioners disagree among them, on what the construct (sustainable development) means and how it should be translated into practice globally. As reviewed in our literature section, the main criticism directed at the construct relates to the non-static and contextual needs of the people. Our analysis implies nonetheless, that a people centric approach across generations and contexts will permit a continuous improvement and adaptation of the people's collective actions to the ongoing environmental challenges. Human capital should therefore be constantly upgraded to capacitate people to play a more effective role in their own development. A people centric approach also implies that the

sustainability of a competitive supranational place brand and that of the place's socio-economic transformation are intertwined. The achievement of one dimension has some positive implications for the other, however not in equal proportions. The development of a supranational place leads to the competitiveness of its brand, and the lack of progress results in a weak supranational place brand. Alternatively, the competitiveness of a supranational place brand reflects the progress of the place represented by the brand. The lack of a supranational place brand's competitiveness may however not always be attributable to underdevelopment. China offers a good example of a mega region which is relatively experiencing steady growth. Nonetheless, market trends show that the Chinese brand has not yet penetrated the global market with the same impact that for instance the UK or USA seems to have achieved. While we may look at the two concepts and practices of sustainable development and place brand as forming a symbiotic relationship, the latter appears to exercise a stronger impact on outsiders' perceptions of the place than its socio-economic growth.

9.3. Conclusion

A strong interest in the construct of *brand Africa* triggered this research, which primarily addressed the question of the extent to which the paradigm of corporate branding can be applied to a supranational region such as a continent (i.e. *brand Africa*). Our research has evolved against the backdrop of social construction as advanced by Thomas Berger and Peter Luckmann in 1966. The epistemological underpinnings of social construction promote, as their essence, the idea that the meaning of a social phenomenon is negotiated by members of a distinct group during interaction. Therefore a given phenomenon is endowed with multiple meanings by

diverse collectives. However, each group holds its perceived meaning as the ‘reality’ and basis for interaction with the object in question. Noting the growing interest in social construction among marketing scholars in particular, our work has documented the emerging interpretations of brands as meanings. Our work has embraced the definition of a brand as a meaning attributed to person or people, a place, an idea and a thing such as a product (Stern, 2006). The meaning is affixed to an entity in order to serve certain socio-economic objectives. We have gone on to argue that brands are socially and economically (financially) significant to both individuals and organisations. It is the potential value of brands which stimulates and energises various brand interest groups to participate in defining a given brand and its value. Hence brand value is as socially negotiated as is the meaning attached to the respective market offering.

Online communities have been featured as the most visible and effective platforms where individuals interested in a brand converge to enact their brand related discourses and share experiences. Online communities are avenues where a market offering and its social value is collectively defined (we have also addressed the issue of value from an equity perspective, underlining the role of the marketplace in setting the financial value of a brand). A knowledge gap has been identified as linked to the potential creation of place meaning within an online community, given the relevance of places to people as consumers, researchers and private individuals among others. Connecting this knowledge gap to the construct of *brand Africa*, we have moved on to question how the African diaspora defines Africa, and the significance of the brand to Africa’s sustainable development. We have taken this route in appreciation of the historical role of the diaspora in shaping Africa’s progress politically (e.g. through

Nkrumahism), and more recently through remittances. The diasporan contribution to Africa has been presented in this work as a sufficient reason for further exploring the individuals' present understanding of what Africa is. The diasporan understanding of Africa has been investigated in connection with the group's perceptions of sustainable development. The intention has been to go beyond conceptualising *brand Africa*, through an analysis of the brand's potential socio-economic value.

Following closely the premise that meanings should be studied within the context in which they are generated, our work has utilised netnography to investigate the construct Africa. A netnographic inquiry with two online communities of African diaspora, and inductive theory building have established that despite serving a cartographical function as well: I) Africa is an allusion to the place's inhabitants, which is composed of ideas about what the African people do locally as a collective and from an outsider perspective; II) Consequently, *brand Africa* can be conceived of as a people centric concept, which is based on the diaspora's sense making of collective actions undertaken by Africans. This is conceptually close to the interpretation of a corporate service brand, which attains mean chiefly through the behaviours of employees and other members of the organisation. The people of Africa make the place brand in question tangible and visible through their actions, in the same sense that the employees of Singapore Airlines are seen as embodying the respective corporate service brand, and; III) The people drive their own sustainable development through proactivity. Our analysis has established that the value of collective actions lies in their capacity to create solutions to the problem of underdevelopment. This is in line with the conceptualisation of the significance of

employees' roles in generating value for diverse brand interest groups (or stakeholders).

Leadership, human capital and integration have been described as 'mediating' the impact of people on progressively transforming their lives. However, our work has indicated that leadership has an overarching relevance: Leaders are central to the co-ordination of collective actions in order to facilitate an optimal utilisation of competitive resources. Leaders also assume a crucial role in representing their place in international partnerships in order to win support for 'fair' projects that lead to more equitable sustainable progress of the place. The fundamental contention extracted from our empirical analysis is that 'people make the place' – which is a well-established premise in the domain of organisational behaviour studies. We have reinterpreted this assertion as implying that people make the place metaphorically in the sense of acting as the source of its meaning, and physically in terms of developing the place sustainably (or failure to do so).

In progressing to the conclusive section of our analysis, we have developed a set of implications around people, leadership and the topic of sustainable development. We have mainly proposed that: I) Internal brand building potentially integrates Africans around the common purpose of sustainable development, and boosts the attractiveness of *brand Africa* to outsiders; II) supranational place branding requires strategic leadership to guide and influence the process; III) If people are the place, and make the place, sustainable development should be conceived of as relating to the people, by the people and for the people. A focus on people may not entirely eliminate some of the confusion and lack of consensus surrounding 'sustainable development' as

noted in our literature review and in the diasporan and expert engagement with the concept. However, a people centric approach to sustainable development potentially empowers individuals to constantly influence their development path and adapt to their natural environment.

For some social actors *brand Africa* may be an idea that contains little if any scientific value. Yet for others it potentially represents a paradigm that can be exploited to address a range of socio-cultural, economic and political aspects linked to sustainable development and other social phenomena. There are many scholars, thinkers and leaders whose work came before this thesis and will continuously enrich our knowledge of Africa. To several of them, the problem of Africa's underdevelopment is an outcome of colonialism. For example Kwame Nkrumah claimed that, "*the true explanation for the slowness of industrial development in Africa lies in the policies of the colonial period*" (Nkrumah 1963, p.24). Contrary to this assumption yet without disqualifying it completely from the debate, this research has revealed and underscored the centrality of people in taking charge of their socio-economic and ecological transformation, and turn *brand Africa* into a competitive global market participant. However, to presume that this research has covered the entire relevant ground, and it delivers an absolute answer to supranational place branding and sustainable development would be an academic exaggeration. The subject of place branding and *brand Africa* in particular appears to be a complex and virgin academic territory that is still to be fully explored.

9.4. Limitations and directions for future research

Potential limitations may be associated with the netnographic inquiry as it limits the analysis to an online environment. Future studies may seek to test the propositions developed in this work, offline, and determine their generalisability across the African diasporan community globally. Smaller scale studies may also be conducted employing statistical assessments of our proposed conceptual relationships. Although measures were taken to minimise bias, the researcher's social background could have subconsciously influenced the study. Studying a phenomenon that the researcher perceives as intertwined with her identity could shape the choice of questions and conceptual elements analysed, albeit this could be useful in providing the research with a narrower focus. To address the likely shortcomings, a similar study could be conducted by a 'non-native' netnographer. Our knowledge of supranational place branding may also benefit from studies that inquire into the impact of sustainable development on place brand competitiveness or perceptions. Furthermore, *brand Africa* represents an uncharted area of research where multiple stakeholder interactions lead to unique interpretations and functions of the brand. For instance the increasing interaction between Africa and China may be worth scrutinising from a place branding perspective. More generally, future studies may also address how supranational place brands participate in the branding of each other e.g. *brand EU* versus *brand USA* or *brand Africa*.

10. LITERATURE

- AAKER, D. A. 1991. *Managing brand equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name*, New York, The Free Press.
- AAKER, D. A. 1996. *Building strong brands*, New York, Free Press.
- AAKER, D. A. & JOACHIMSTHALER, E. 2000. *Brand leadership*, New York, Free Press.
- AAKER DAVID, A. 2004. Leveraging the corporate brand. *California Management Review*, 46, 6-18.
- ABIMBOLA, T. 2006. Market access for developing economies: Branding in Africa. *Place Branding*, 2, 108-117.
- ABRAM, S., MURDOCH, J. & MARSDEN, T. 1996. The social construction of 'Middle England': The politics of participation in forward planning. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 12, 353-364.
- ADI, H. 2002. The African diaspora, 'development' and modern African political theory. *Review of African Political Economy*, 29, 237-251.
- ADIBE, J. P. (ed.) 2009. *Who is an African?: Identity, Citizenship and the Making of the Africa-nation*, London: Adonis & Abbey.
- AFRICA PROGRESS PANEL. 2014. *Grain, fish, money: Financing Africa's Green and Blue Revolutions* [Online]. Available: <http://africaprogresspanel.org/publications/policy-papers/2014-africa-progress-report/> [Accessed 10/05/2014].
- AFRICA PROGRESS PANEL [THE]. 2013. Equity in Extractives: Stewarding Africa's natural resources for all. Available: http://africaprogresspanel.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/2013_APR_Equity_in_Extractives_25062013_ENG_HR.pdf [Accessed 07/01/2014].
- AFRICA PROGRESS PANEL [THE]. 2014. Grain, fish, money: Financing Africa's green and blue revolutions. Available: <http://africaprogresspanel.org/publications/policy-papers/2014-africa-progress-report/> [Accessed 10/05/2014].
- AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK [THE]. 2011. Africa in 50 years' time: The road towards inclusive growth. Available: http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Africa_in_50_Years_Time.pdf [Accessed 10/01/2012].
- AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK [THE]. 2012. *Border Posts, Checkpoints, and Intra-African Trade: Challenges and Solutions* [Online]. Available: http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/INTRA_AFRICAN_TRADE_INTRA_AFRICAN_TRADE.pdf [Accessed 23/03/2014].
- AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK [THE]. 2013. Harnessing Remittances for Africa's Development. Available: <http://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/afdb-championing-inclusive-growth-across-africa/post/harnessing-remittances-for-africas-development-11565/> [Accessed 10/01/2014].
- AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK [THE]. 2014a. Distribution of voting power by executive director statement of voting power as at 28 february 2014. Available: http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Boards-Documents/AfDB_Statement_of_Voting_Power_as_at_28_February_2014.pdf [Accessed 01/04/2014].

- AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK [THE]. 2014b. Mission and objective. Available: <http://www.afdb.org/about-us/mission-objective/> [Accessed 01/04/2014].
- AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK [THE], ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT [THE], UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME [THE] & ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA OF THE UNITED NATIONS. 2013a. African Economic Outlook 2013: Structural Transformation and Natural Resources. Available: [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Reports/African Economic Outlook 2013 En.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Reports/African_Economic_Outlook_2013_En.pdf) [Accessed 10/01/2014].
- AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK [THE], ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT [THE], UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME [THE] & UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA [THE] 2013b. African Economic Outlook. Special theme: Structural transformation and natural resources.
- AFRICAN DIASPORA PROGRAM [WORLD BANK]. 2013. African Diaspora. Available: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:22141991~menuPK:34480~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html> [Accessed 10/01/2014].
- AFRICAN UNION [THE]. 2012. African Union strives to mainstream the diaspora within the continent's development agenda. *Global African Diasporan Summit*. Available: http://summits.au.int/en/sites/default/files/Article_for_publication_on_Global_Diaspora_Summit_17_05_12.pdf [Accessed 10/01/2014].
- AFRICAN UNION [THE]. 2014a. African Standby Force (ASF). Available: <http://www.peaceau.org/en/page/77-asf> [Accessed 15/10/2014].
- AFRICAN UNION [THE]. 2014b. AU in a nutshell: Introduction. Available: <http://www.au.int/en/about/nutshell> [Accessed 01/01/2014].
- AFRICAN UNION [THE]. 2014c. The Financial Institutions. Available: <http://www.au.int/en/organs/fi> [Accessed 15/10/2014].
- AFRICAN UNION [THE]. 2014d. RECs. Available: <http://www.au.int/en/> [Accessed 17/03/2014].
- AITKEN, R. & CAMPELO, A. 2011. The four Rs of place branding. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27, 913-933.
- AKE, C. 1996. *Democracy and development in Africa*, MA, Brookings Institution.
- AKINDELE, O., IYAMABO, J. & OTUBANJO, O. 2013. Social Constructionism and the Corporate Brand: Semiotic Analyses of Print Adverts. *Business Management and Strategy*, 4, pp. 13-31.
- AL-SULAITI, K. I. & BAKER, M. J. 1998. Country of origin effects: A literature review. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 16, 150-199.
- ALEXA. 2013. How popular is Topix.com. 2013. Available: <http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/topix.com> [Accessed 15 /11/2013].
- ALLEN, C. 1995. Understanding African politics. *Review of African Political Economy*, 22, 301-320.
- ANDERSON, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New Edition)*, London, Verso.
- ANDERSSON, M. 2007. Region branding: The case of the Baltic Sea region. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 3, 120-130.

- ANDERSSON, M. & PAAJANEN, M. 2012. Common or competing products? Towards supra-national branding in BaltMet Promo. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 5, 56-69.
- ANDREWS, M. 2013. Do International Organizations really shape government solutions in developing countries? In: CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, H. U. (ed.) Working Paper ed.
- ANHOLT, S. 2006. The Anholt-GMI city brands index: How the world sees the world's cities. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 2, 18-31.
- ANHOLT, S. 2010. Definitions of place branding – Working towards a resolution. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 6 1–10.
- ANHOLT, S. & HILDRETH, J. 2004. *Brand America: The mother of all brands*, London, Cyan.
- ANHOLT, S. & HILDRETH, J. 2005. Let freedom and cash registers ring: America as a brand1. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 1, 164-172.
- ANHOLT, S. & HILDRETH, J. 2010. *Brand America: The making, unmaking and remaking of the greatest national image of all time*, Marshall Cavendish.
- ANKOMAH, P., LARSON, T., ROBERSON, V. & ROTICH, J. 2012. A Creative Approach to Development The Case for Active Engagement of African Diaspora in Ghana. *Journal of Black Studies*, 43, 385-404.
- APTHORPE, R. 1968. Does tribalism really matter? [Social Sciences in Africa revisited: Did the colonialists invent 'tribes'? Social values and development. *Transition*, 18-22.
- ARGYRIS, C. 1998. Empowerment: The emperor's new clothes. *Harvard Business Review*, 95-105.
- ARNDT, R. T. 2005. *The first resort of kings: American cultural diplomacy in the twentieth century*, Washington, Potomac.
- ARNOULD, E. J. & THOMPSON, C. J. 2005. Consumer culture theory (CCT): Twenty years of research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31, 868-882.
- ARNOULD, E. J. & WALLENDORF, M. 1994. Market-oriented ethnography: interpretation building and marketing strategy formulation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, XXXI, 484-504.
- ARONCZYK, M. 2009. Research in brief how to do things with brands: Uses of national identity. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 34, 291-296.
- ARVIDSSON, A. 2005. *Brands: Meaning and value in media culture*, Oxon, Routledge.
- ARVIDSSON, A. 2006. Brand value. *The Journal of Brand Management*, 13, 188-192.
- ASHWORTH, G. J. 2008. Can we, do we, should we, brand places? Or are we doing what we think and say we are doing? *First International Conference "Marketing Cities: Place Branding in Perspective"* Berlin.
- ATKINSON, P. & HAMMERSLEY, M. 1994. Ethnography and participant observation. In: DENZIN, N. K. & LINCOLN, Y. S. (eds.) *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Sage.
- AVELINE, J. 2006. Branding Europe? Branding, design and post-national loyalties. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 2, 334-340.
- AXELROD, R. M. 2006. *The evolution of cooperation*, New York, Basic Books.
- AYISI, E. O. 1972. *An introduction to the study of African culture*, Nairobi, East African.
- BAKER, M. J. & BALLINGTON, L. 2002. Country of origin as a source of competitive advantage. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 10, 157-168.

- BALMER, J. M. & GREYSER, S. A. 2002. Managing the multiple identities of the corporation. *California Management Review*, 44, 72-86.
- BALMER, J. M. T. 2001. Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate marketing - Seeing through the fog. *European Journal of Marketing*, 35, 248-291.
- BARNEY, J. 1991. Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17, 99-120.
- BASS, B. M. 1991. From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision. *Organizational Dynamics*, 18, 19-31.
- BATEY, M. 2008. *Brand meaning*, Oxon, Routledge.
- BECKER, H. S. 1958. Problems of inference and proof in participant observation. *American Sociological Review*, 23, 652-660.
- BECKER, H. S. & GEER, B. 1957. Participant observation and interviewing: A comparison. *Human Organization*, 16, 28-32.
- BELK, R. W., SHERRY JR, J. F. & WALLENDORF, M. 1988. A naturalistic inquiry into buyer and seller behavior at a swap meet. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14, 449-470.
- BENGTTSSON, A. & FIRAT, A. F. 2006. Brand literacy: consumers' sense-making of brand management. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 33, 375-380.
- BERGER, P. & LUCKMANN, T. 1966. *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*, New York, Doubleday.
- BLUMENTHAL, D. 2005. Why branding, as we know it, is about to collapse. *Journal of Brand Management*, 12, 148-150.
- BOAHEN, A. A. (ed.) 1985. *General History of Africa VII: Africa under colonial domination 1880-1935*, California: Heinemann.
- BOISEN, M., TERLOUW, K. & VAN GORP, B. 2011. The selective nature of place branding and the layering of spatial identities. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 4, 135-147.
- BRAND SOUTH AFRICA. 2014. What we do. Available: <http://www.brandsouthafrica.com/what-we-do> [Accessed 10/03/2014].
- BRANDINGAFRICA EAST AFRICA. 2013. Branding Africa -Tweeting conversations on the Brand of Africa and its associations (East Africa). 2013. Available: <https://twitter.com/brandingafrica> [Accessed 01/09/2013].
- BREXENDORF, T. O. & KERNSTOCK, J. 2007. Corporate behaviour vs brand behaviour: Towards an integrated view? *Journal of Brand Management*, 15, 32-40.
- BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION (BBC) [THE]. 2011. Libya: UN backs action against Colonel Gaddafi. Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12781009> [Accessed 14/10/2014].
- BROAD, R. 1994. The poor and the environment: friends or foes? *World Development*, 22, 811-822.
- BRODIE, R. J. & DE CHERNATONY, L. 2009. Towards new conceptualizations of branding: Theories of the middle range. *Marketing Theory*, 9, 95-100.
- BROWN, S., KOZINETS, R. V. & SHERRY, J. F. J. 2003. Teaching old brands new tricks: Retro branding and the revival of brand meaning. *Journal of Marketing*, 67, 19-33.
- BROWNING, B. 1998. *Infectious rhythm: Metaphors of contagion and the spread of African culture*, London, Routledge.

- BYAMUGISHA, F. F. K. 2013. Securing Africa's land for shared prosperity : A program to scale up reforms and investments *Africa Development Forum Series*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- CABLE NEWS NETWORK. 2013. *Marketplace Africa*. "Out of Africa: The minerals that make the world go round" [Online]. Available: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/25/world/africa/africa-resources-fuel-world>.
- CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARIES ONLINE. 2014. Available: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/empire> [Accessed 08/10/2014].
- CARTER, D. 2005. Living in virtual communities: An ethnography of human relationships in cyberspace. *Information, Community & Society*, 8, 148-167.
- CAVES, R. E. 1980. Industrial organization, corporate strategy and structure. *Economic Literature*, 18, 64-92.
- CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (CIA) [THE]. 2014. The World factbook: Nigeria. Available: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html> [Accessed 05/10/2014].
- CHAMBERLAIN, M. E. 1999. *The scramble for Africa*, UK, Addison Wesley Longman.
- CHARMAZ, K. 2006. *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*, London, Sage.
- CHRISTIANSEN, T., JORGENSEN, K. E. & WIENER, A. 1999. The social construction of Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 6, 528-544.
- CHRISTODOULIDES, G. 2007. Breaking free from the industrial age paradigm of branding. *Journal of Brand Management*, 15, 291-293.
- COHEN, R. 2008. *Global diasporas: An introduction*, Oxon, Routledge.
- COLCOLOUGH, C. 1989. The higher education paradox in African Development Planning. *Education Development* 9, 271-281.
- COLLIER, P. 2008. *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- CONNELLY, S. 2007. Mapping sustainable development as a contested concept. *Local Environment*, 12, 259-278.
- COVA, B. & COVA, V. 2002. Tribal marketing: The tribalisation of society and its impact on the conduct of marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36, 595-620.
- CURRID, E. & WILLIAMS, S. 2010. The geography of buzz: Art, culture and the social milieu in Los Angeles and New York. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 10, 423-451.
- DALL'OLMO-RILEY, F. & DE CHERNATONY, L. 2000. The service brand as relationships builder. *British Journal of Management*, 11, 137-150.
- DANISH INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES. 2012. Brand Africa: The implications of selling Africa as a symbolic commodity. Available: <http://www.diis.dk/sw117842.asp> [Accessed 01/04/2013].
- DARWALL, S. L. 1977. Two kinds of respect. *Ethics*, 88, 36-49.
- DE CHERNATONY, L. 1999. Brand Management through narrowing the gap between brand identity and brand reputation. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15, 157-179.
- DE CHERNATONY, L. 2002. Would a brand smell any sweeter by a corporate name? *Corporate reputation review*, 5, 2-3.

- DE CHERNATONY, L. & COTTAM, S. 2006. Internal brand factors driving successful financial services brands. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40, 611-633.
- DE CHERNATONY, L. & DALL'OLMO RILEY, F. 1999. Experts' views about defining services brands and the principles of services branding. *Journal of Business Research*, 46, 181-192.
- DE CHERNATONY, L. & DALL'OLMO-RILEY, F. 1998. Defining a "brand": Beyond the literature with experts' interpretations. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 14, 417-443.
- DE CHERNATONY, L. & DALL'OLMO-RILEY, F. 1998a. Expert practitioners' views on roles of brands: Implications for marketing communications. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 4, 87-100.
- DE CHERNATONY, L. & HARRIS, F. 2000. Developing corporate brands through considering internal and external stakeholders. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 3, 268-274.
- DE CHERNATONY, L., MCDONALD, M. & ELAINE, W. 2011. *Creating Powerful Brands*, Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann.
- DE CHERNATONY, L. & SEGAL-HORN, S. 2001. Building on services' characteristics to develop successful services brands. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 17, 645-669.
- DEBERRY-SPENCE, B. 2008. Consumer creations of product meaning in the context of African-style clothing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36, 395-408.
- DENZIN, N. K. 2006. *Sociological methods: A sourcebook*. New Jersey: Transaction
- DEVINE-WRIGHT, P. & LYONS, E. 1997. Remembering pasts and representing places: The construction of national identities in Ireland. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 17, 33-45.
- DINNIE, K. 2005. Brand America: The mother of all brands. Book Review. *Journal of Brand Management*, 12, 405-406.
- DOMÍNGUEZ, D., BEAULIEU, A., ESTALELLA, A., GÓMEZ, E., SCHNETTLER, B. & READ, R. 2007. Virtual ethnography. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* [Online], 8. Available: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/274/601> [Accessed 10/01/2011].
- DOYLE, D. P. 1994. Developing human capital: The role of the private sector. *Theory Into Practice*, 33, 218-226.
- EASTERLY, W. & LEVINE, R. 1995. Africa's growth tragedy. Available: http://dems.unimib.it/corsi/664/testi/easterly_1995.pdf [Accessed 10/01/2014].
- ECONOMIST [THE]. 2010. Cartography: The true true size of Africa. Available: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2010/11/cartography> [Accessed 08/10/2014].
- ECONOMIST [THE]. 2011. The hopeful continent: Africa rising. Available: <http://www.economist.com/node/21541015> [Accessed 01/05/2012].
- ECONOMIST [THE]. 2013. Africa Rising: A hopeful continent (Special Report on: Emerging Africa). Available: <http://www.economist.com/printedition/2013-03-02> [Accessed 10/12/2013].
- ELLIOTT, J. 1994. *An introduction to sustainable development: The developing world*, London, Routledge.
- ELLIOTT, J. 2006. *An introduction to sustainable development*, London, Routledge.

- ENGLEBERT, P. 2000. *State legitimacy and development in Africa*, London, Lynne Rienner.
- ESCALAS, J. E. & BETTMAN, J. R. 2005. Self-construal, reference groups, and brand meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32, 378-389.
- EUROPEAN UNION [THE]. 2014a. Foreign and security policy. Available: http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/index_en.htm [Accessed 12/10/2014].
- EUROPEAN UNION [THE]. 2014b. The history of the European Union: The Founding Fathers of the EU. Available: http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm [Accessed 31/10/2014].
- EVANS, G. 2003. Hard-branding the cultural city—from Prado to Prada. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27, 417-440.
- FAN, Y. 2006. Branding the nation: What is being branded? *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 12, 5-14.
- FAN, Y. 2008. Soft power: Power of attraction or confusion? *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 4, 147-158.
- FAN, Y. 2010. Branding the nation: Towards a better understanding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 6, 97-103.
- FARRELL, J. & STRAUSS, K. (eds.) 2014. *The people make the place, and they make things happen: Proactive behavior at work*, London: Relationships in organisations: A work psychology perspective (forthcoming).
- FEHR, E. & FISCHBACHER, U. 2003. The nature of human altruism. *Nature*, 425, 785-791.
- FIELD, A. M. 2012. Rebranding the dark continent. *Journal of Commerce*, 22-26.
- FIRAT, A. F. & VENKATESH, A. 1995. Liberatory postmodernism and the reenchantment of consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, 239-267.
- FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) OF THE UNITED NATIONS. 2014. Hunger Portal. Available: <http://www.fao.org/hunger/en/> [Accessed 01/04/2014].
- FORSBERG, T. 2003. The Ground without foundation: Territory as a social construct. *Geopolitics*, 8, 7-24.
- FOSLER-LUSSIER, D. 2012. Music Pushed, Music Pulled: Cultural Diplomacy, Globalization, and Imperialism”, . *Diplomatic History*, 36, 53-64.
- FOUCAULT, M. 2002. *The archaeology of knowledge*, London, Routledge.
- FOURNIER, S. 1998. Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24, 343-353.
- FOURNIER, S. & LEE, L. 2009. Getting brand communities right. *Harvard Business Review*, 87, 6.
- FRENCH, A. & SMITH, G. 2010. Measuring political brand equity: A consumer oriented approach. *European Journal of Marketing*, 44, 460-477.
- FRESE, M. 2009. Toward a Psychology of Entrepreneurship — An action theory perspective. *Foundations and Trend in Entrepreneurship*, 5, 435-449.
- FUELLER, J., JAWECKI, G. & MUEHLBACHER, H. 2007. Innovation creation by online basketball communities. *Journal of Business Research*, 60, 60-71.
- FUELLER, J., MATZLER, K. & HOPPE, M. 2008. Brand community members as a source of innovation. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 25, 608-619.
- GARVEY, M. 2009. The philosophy and opinions of Marcus Garvey. In: AMY, J.-G. (ed.). *The Journal of Pan African Studies*.
- GATES FOUNDATION [THE]. 2014. Available: <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/> [Accessed 10/01/2014].

- GEUKA, A. D. 2014. African Centered Education Defined. Available: <http://www.jlnscs.org/about-us/african-centered-education-defined> [Accessed 10/05/2014].
- GLADWIN, T. N., KENNELLY, J. J. & KRAUSE, T.-S. 1995. Shifting paradigms for sustainable development: Implications for management theory and research. *Academy of Management Review*, 20, 874-907.
- GLASER, B. G. & STRAUSS, A. L. 1967. The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative inquiry. London [u.a.]: Aldine Transaction.
- GO, F. & GOVERS, R. 2009. *Place Branding: Glocal, virtual and physical identities, constructed, imagined and experienced*, Hampshire, U.K., Palgrave Macmillan.
- GOULDING, C. 2000. Grounded theory methodology and consumer behaviour, procedures, practice and pitfalls. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 27, 261-266.
- GRAIN. 2012. Squeezing Africa Dry: Behind every land grab is a water grab. Available: <http://www.grain.org/article/entries/4516-squeezing-africa-dry-behind-every-land-grab-is-a-water-grab> [Accessed 17/05/2014].
- GRANT, A. M. & ASHFORD, S. J. 2008. The dynamics of proactivity at work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 28, 3-34.
- GRBICH, C. 2007. *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction*, London, Sage.
- GREGORY, A. 2007. Involving stakeholders in developing corporate brands: The communication dimension. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23, 59-73.
- GRIFFITH, D. A. & HARVEY, M. G. 2001. A resource perspective of global dynamic capabilities. *International Business Studies*, 32, 597-606.
- GUNDRY, R. H. 1987. The new Jerusalem: People as place, not place for people. *Novum Testamentum*, 254-264.
- GYIMAH-BREMPONG, K., PADDISON, O. & MITIKU, W. 2006. Higher education and economic growth in Africa. *Journal of Development Studies*, 42, 509-529.
- HAAS, E. B. & SCHMITTER, P. C. 1964. Economics and differential patterns of political integration: projections about unity in Latin America. *International Organization*, 18, 705-737.
- HACKING, I. 1999. *The social construction of what?*, MA, Harvard University Press.
- HACKLEY, C. E. 1998. Social constructionism and research in marketing and advertising. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 1, 125-131.
- HACKLEY, C. E. 2010. *Advertising and promotion: An integrated marketing communications approach*, London, Sage.
- HAGEL, J. I. & ARMSTRONG, A. G. 1997. *Net Gain: Expanding markets through virtual communities*, Boston, MA, Harvard Business School.
- HAMBRICK, D. C. 1997. Corporate Coherence and the management team. *Strategy and Leadership*, 24-29.
- HAMMERSLEY, M. 1990. *Reading ethnographic research: A critical guide*, London, Routledge.
- HARRINGTON, E. B. 2003. The social psychology of access in ethnographic research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 32, 592-625.
- HARTZENBERG, T. 2011. Regional integration in Africa. Available: <http://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/57595> [Accessed 10/10/2014].
- HATCH, M. J. & SCHULTZ, M. 2003. Bringing the corporation into corporate branding. *European Journal of Marketing*, 37, 1041-1064.

- HATCH, M. J. & SCHULTZ, M. 2010. Toward a theory of brand co-creation with implications for brand governance *Journal of Brand Management*, 17, 590-604.
- HEALY, J. C. & MCDONAGH, P. 2013. Consumer roles in brand culture and value co-creation in virtual communities. *Journal of Business Research*, 66, 1528-1540.
- HEMMER, C. M. & KATZENSTEIN, P. J. 2002. Why is there no NATO in Asia? Collective identity, regionalism, and the origins of multilateralism. *International Organization*, 56, 575-607.
- HILLERY, G. A. 1955. Definitions of community: Areas of agreement. *Rural Sociology*, 20, 111-123.
- HINE, C. 2000. *Virtual ethnography*, London, Sage.
- HINE, C. 2007. Connective ethnography for the exploration of e-Science. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12, 618-634.
- HOGG, M. A. & ABRAMS, D. 1988. *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes*, London, Routledge.
- HOLT, D. B. 2002. Why do brands cause trouble? A dialectical theory of consumer culture and branding. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29, 70-90.
- HOLT, D. B. 2004. *How brands become icons: The principles of cultural branding*, Boston, MA, Harvard Business School.
- HOPKINS, A. G. 2009. The new economic history of Africa. *Journal of African History*, 50, 155-177.
- HOPWOOD, B., MELLOR, M. & O'BRIEN, G. 2005. Sustainable development: Mapping different approaches. *Sustainable Development*, 13, 38-52.
- HUTCHISON, A. J., JOHNSTON, L. H. & BRECKON, J. D. 2010. Using QSR-NVivo to facilitate the development of a grounded theory project: an account of a worked example. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 13, 283-302.
- IND, N. 1997. *The corporate brand*, London, Macmillan
- IND, N. 2007. *Living the brand: How to transform every member of your organization into a brand champion*, London, Kogan.
- JAROSZ, L. 1992. Constructing the dark continent: Metaphor as geographic representation of Africa. *Geografiska Annaler B*, 74, 105-115.
- JOHNSTON, L. 2006. Software and method: Reflections on teaching and using QSR NVivo in doctoral research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 9, 379-391.
- JONES, J. M. 2003. TRIOS: A psychological theory of the African legacy in American culture. *Journal of Social Issues*, 59, 217-242.
- JONES, P. & WILKS-HEEG, S. 2004. Capitalising culture: Liverpool 2008. *Local Economy*, 19, 341-360.
- JONES, Q. & RAFAELI, S. 2000. Time to split, virtually: 'Discourse architecture' and 'community building' create vibrant virtual publics. *Electronic Markets*, 10, 214-223.
- JONES, Q. & RAFAELI, S. 2000a. What do virtual 'Tells' tell? Placing cybersociety research into a hierarchy of social explanation. *Proceedings of the 33rd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* [Online]. Available: <http://gsb.haifa.ac.il/~sheizaf/publications/tells.pdf> [Accessed 10/10/2011].
- JONES, R. 2005. Finding sources of brand value: Developing a stakeholder model of brand equity. *Journal of Brand Management*, 13, 10-32.

- KAMOCHE, K. 1997. Competence-creation in the African public sector. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 10, 268-278.
- KAPFERER, J.-N. 2004. *The new strategic brand management: Creating and sustaining brand equity long term*, London, Kogan Page.
- KAPLAN, M. D., YURT, O., GUNERI, B. & KURTULUS, K. 2010. Branding places: Applying brand personality concept to cities. *European Journal of Marketing*, 44, 1286-1304.
- KATES, S. M. 2004. The dynamics of brand legitimacy: An interpretive study in the gay men's community. *Journal of consumer research*, 31, 455-464.
- KATES, S. M. & GOH, C. 2003. Brand morphing: Implications for advertising theory and practice. *Journal of Advertising*, 32, 59-68.
- KAVARATZIS, M. 2004. From city marketing to city branding: Towards a theoretical framework for developing city brands. *Place Branding*, 1, 58-73.
- KAVARATZIS, M. 2005. Place branding: A review of trends and conceptual models. *The Marketing Review*, 5, 329-342.
- KAVARATZIS, M. 2009. Cities and their brands: Lessons from corporate branding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 5, 26-37.
- KAVARATZIS, M. & ASHWORTH, G. J. 2005. City branding: An effective assertion of identity or a transitory marketing trick? *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 96, 506-514.
- KELLER, K. L. 2008. *Strategic brand management: Building, measuring and managing brand equity*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, Prentice Hall.
- KELLER, K. L. & LEHMANN, D. R. 2003. How do brands create value? *Marketing Management*, 12, 26-31.
- KELLER, K. L. & LEHMANN, D. R. 2006. Brands and branding: Research findings and future priorities. *Marketing Science*, 25, 740-759.
- KIM, H.-S. & JIN, B. 2006. Exploratory study of virtual communities of apparel retailers. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 10, 41-55.
- KIRKPATRICK, S. A. & LOCKE, E. A. 1991. Leadership: do traits matter? *The Executive*, 5, 48-60.
- KLEIST, N. 2008. Mobilising 'The Diaspora': Somali Transnational Political Engagement. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34, 307-323.
- KOMITO, L. 2001. Electronic communities in an information society: paradise, mirage, or malaise? *Journal of Documentation*, 57, 115-129.
- KOTLER, P. & ARMSTRONG, G. 1996. *Principles of Marketing*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall.
- KOTLER, P. & GERTNER, D. 2002. Country as brand, product, and beyond: A place marketing and brand management perspective. *Journal of Brand Management*, 9, 249-261.
- KOTLER, P., JATUSRIPITAK, S. & MAESINCEE, S. 1997. *The marketing of nations: A strategic approach to building national wealth*, New York, Free Press
- KOZINETS, R. V. 2002. The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39, 61-72.
- KOZINETS, R. V. 2010. *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*, London [u.a.], SAGE.
- KUEHN, K. M. 2009. Compassionate Consumption: Branding Africa Through Product RED. *Democratic Communiqué*, 23, 23-40.

- KULAVUZ-ONAL, D. & VÁSQUEZ, C. 2013. Reconceptualising fieldwork in a netnography of an online community of English language teachers. *Ethnography and Education*, 8, 224-238.
- KUPER, H. & KUPER, L. 1965. *African law: Adaptation and development*, California, California University Press.
- LANGER, R. & BECKMAN, S. C. 2005. Sensitive research topics: netnography revisited. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 8, 189-203.
- LAWER, C. & KNOX, S. 2006. Customer advocacy and brand development. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 15, 121-129.
- LEANDER, K. M. & MCKIM, K. K. 2003. Tracing the everyday 'sitings' of adolescents on the internet: A strategic adaptation of ethnography across online and offline spaces. *Education, Communication & Information*, 3, 211-240.
- LEECH, N. L. & ONWUEGBUZIE, A. J. 2011. Beyond constant comparison qualitative data analysis: Using NVivo. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 26, 70.
- LEGUM, C. 1964. *Pan-Africanism: A short political guide*, London, Frederick A. Praeger.
- LÉLÉ, S. M. 1991. Sustainable development: A critical review. *World Development*, 19, 607-621.
- LEPAK, D. P., SMITH, K. G. & TAYLOR, S. M. 2007. Value creation and value capture: A multilevel perspective. *Academy of Management Review* 32, 180-194.
- LEVY, S. J. 1959. Symbols for sale. *Harvard Business Review*, 117-124.
- LEWIS, A. W. 1955. *The theory of economic growth*, London, Irwin.
- LEWIS, M. 1995. *Shame: The exposed self*, New York, Free Press.
- LEWIS, M. W. & WIGEN, K. E. 1997. *The myth of continents: A critique of metageography*, California, California University Press.
- LISK, F. 1977. Lisk F Conventional development strategies and basic needs fulfilment: A reassessment of the objectives and policies. *International Labour Review* 115, 175-191.
- LISK, F. 2013. 'Land grabbing' or harnessing of development potential in agriculture? East Asia's land-based investments in Africa. *The Pacific Review*, 26, 563-587.
- LUEDICKE, M. K. 2006. Brand community under fire: The role of social environments for the HUMMER brand community. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 33, 486-493.
- LUEDICKE, M. K. 2006a. *A theory of marketing: Outline of a social systems perspective*, Wiesbaden, Springer.
- LYNTON, E. A. & ELMAN, S. E. 1987. *New Priorities for the University. Meeting Society's Needs for Applied Knowledge and Competent Individuals*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- MACDONALD, A. M., BONSOR, H. C., DOCHARTAIGH, B. E. O. & TAYLOR, R. G. 2012. Quantitative maps of groundwater resources in Africa. *Environmental Research Letters*, 7, 1-7.
- MAFEJE, A. 1971. The ideology of 'tribalism'. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 9, 253-261.
- MAHAJAN, V. 2011. *Africa rising: How 900 million African consumers offer more than you think*, Upper Saddle, NJ, Prentice Hall.

- MARKHAM, A. N. 2005. The methods, politics, and ethics of representation in online ethnography. In: DENZIN, N. K. & LINCOLN, Y. S. (eds.) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks California: Sage.
- MASLOW, A. H. 1943. A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396.
- MATEI, S. A. 2005. From counterculture to cyberculture: Virtual community discourse and the dilemma of modernity. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10, 00-00.
- MAYES, R. 2008. A place in the sun: The politics of place, identity and branding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 4, 124-135.
- MCCRACKEN, G. 1986a. Culture and consumption: A theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13, 71-84.
- MCCRACKEN, G. 1986b. Culture and consumption: a theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods. *Journal of consumer research*, 71-84.
- MCEACHERN, D. 2006. Brandstanding: Four cities share their success. *Public Management*, , June, 9-12.
- MCLELLAND, M. J. 2002. Virtual ethnography: Using the Internet to study gay culture in Japan. *Sexualities*, 5, 387-406.
- MEADOWCROFT, J. 2000. Sustainable development: A new (ish) idea for a new century? *Political Studies*, 48, 370-387.
- MEBRATU, D. 1998. Sustainability and sustainable development: Historical and conceptual review. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 18, 493-520.
- MERRILEES, B., MILLER, D. & HERINGTON, C. 2012. Multiple stakeholders and multiple city brand meanings. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46, 1032-1047.
- MERZ, M. A., HE, Y. & VARGO, S. L. 2009. The evolving brand logic: A service-dominant logic perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 37, 328-344.
- MILES, M. B. & HUBERMAN, A. M. 1994. *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*, London, Sage.
- MKONO, M. 2012. A netnographic examination of constructive authenticity in Victoria Falls tourist (restaurant) experiences. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31, 387-394.
- MO IBRAHIM FOUNDATION. 2014. The Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Available: <http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/iiag/> [Accessed 10/01/2014].
- MOHAN, G. & ZACK-WILLIAMS, A. B. 2002. Globalisation from below: Conceptualising the role of the African diasporas in Africa's development. *Review of African Political Economy*, 29, 211-236.
- MOORE, M. & DADAY, J. 2010. Barriers to human capital development: Case studies in Swaziland, Cameroon and Kenya. *Africa Education Review*, 7, 283-304.
- MOYO, D. 2009a. *Dead aid: Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa*, London, Allen Lane.
- MOYO, D. 2009b. *Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa*. Available: <http://www.dambisamoyo.com/books-and-publications/book/dead-aid> [Accessed 01/04/2014].
- MUEHLBACHER, H. & HEMETSBERGER, A. 2008. What the heck is a brand: An attempt of integration and its consequences for research and management. Proceedings of the 7th International Congress Marketing Trends. Venice.

- Available: http://www.escp-eap.net/conferences/marketing/2008_cp/Materiali/Paper/Fr/Muhlbacher_Hemetsberger.pdf [Accessed 01/11/2009].
- MUGOBO, V. V. & UKPERE, W. I. 2011. Is Country branding a panacea or poison? *African Journal of Business Management*, 5, 8248-8255.
- MUÑIZ, A. M. J. & O'GUINN, T. C. 2001. Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27, 412-432.
- MUÑIZ, A. M. J. & SCHAU, H. J. 2007. Vigilante marketing and consumer-created communications. *Journal of Advertising*, 36, 35-50.
- NELSON, M. R. & OTNES, C. C. 2005. Exploring cross-cultural ambivalence: a netnography of intercultural wedding message boards. *Journal of Business Research*, 58, 89-95.
- NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION. 2011. Brand Africa Initiative. Available: <http://www.nepad.org/nepad/blog/2011/05/30/2268/brand-africa-initiative> [Accessed 15/05/2013].
- NEW YORK TIMES [THE]. 2012a. Africa on the Rise. [Accessed 10/11/2012].
- NEW YORK TIMES [THE]. 2012b. In Zimbabwe Land Takeover, a Golden Lining. Available: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/21/world/africa/in-zimbabwe-land-takeover-a-golden-lining.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 [Accessed 01/10/2014].
- NEWTIME AFRICA. 2013. Branding Africa and debunking the myths about its potential. Available: <http://www.newtimeafrica.com/archives/31898> [Accessed 15/05/2013].
- NICOL, A. D. 1964. The Meaning of Africa. In: REED, J. & WAKE, C. (eds.) *A Book of African Verse* London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- NKRUMAH, K. 1963. *Africa must unite*, New York, Frederick A. Praeger.
- O'GUINN, T. C. & MUÑIZ, A. M. J. 2009. Collective brand relationships. In: MACINNIS, D. J., WHAN, C. & P.J.R., P. (eds.) *Handbook of brand relationships* Armonk, New York: M E Sharpe.
- O'GUINN, T. C. & MUÑIZ, A. M. J. 2010. Towards a sociological model of brands. In: LOKEN, B., AHLUWALIA, R. & HOUSTON, M. J. (eds.) *Brands and brand management: Contemporary research perspectives*. New York: Taylor and Francis
- O'SHAUGHNESSY, J. & O'SHAUGHNESSY, N. J. 2000. Treating the nation as a brand: Some neglected issues. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 20, 56-64.
- OLINS, W. 2002. Branding the nation - the historical context. *Journal of Brand Management*, 9, 241-248.
- OLINS, W. 2003. *On brand*, London, Thames & Hudson
- OLINS, W. 2008. *Wally Olins: The brand handbook*, London, Thames & Hudson.
- ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT. 2012. Africa fact sheet: Main economic indicators. Available: <http://www.oecd.org/investment/investmentfordevelopment/47452483.pdf> [Accessed 15/05/2013].
- ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT [THE]. 2014. OECD Better Life Index: Norway. Available: <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/norway/> [Accessed 22/05/2014].
- OSEI, C. & GBADAMOSI, A. 2011. Re-branding Africa. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 29, 284-304.

- OXFORD DICTIONARIES. 2014. Available: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/white?q=whites-white> 23 [Accessed 13/10/2014].
- OXFORD DICTIONARIES ONLINE. 2014. Available: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/home?q=home> [Accessed 14/11/2013].
- PAASI, A. 2001. Europe as a social process and discourse: Considerations of place, boundaries and identity. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 8, 7-28.
- PAASI, A. 2003. Region and place: Regional identity in question. *Progress in Human Geography*, 27, 475-485.
- PACCAGNELLA, L. 1997. Getting the seats of your pants dirty: Strategies for ethnographic research on virtual communities. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 3, 0-0.
- PALMER, C. A. 2000. Defining and studying the modern African diaspora. *The Journal of Negro History*, , 85, No. , 27-32.
- PAPADOPOULOS, N. 2004. Place branding: Evolution, meaning and implications. *Place Branding*, 1, 36-49.
- PARENTI, M. 2003. What does it mean to love one's country? *Peace Review*, 15, 385-388.
- PAYNE, A., STORBACKA, K., FROW, P. & KNOX, S. 2009. Co-creating brands: Diagnosing and designing the relationship experience. *Journal of Business Research*, 62, 379-389.
- PILIAVIN, J. A. & CHARNG, H.-W. 1990. Altruism: A review of recent theory and research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27-65.
- PITT, L. F., WATSON, R. T., BERTHON, P., WYNN, D. & ZINKHAN, G. 2006. The penguin's window: Corporate brands from an open-source perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34, 115-127.
- PLATT, J. 1983. The development of the "participant observation" method in sociology: Origin myth and history. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 19, 379-393.
- POE, D. Z. 2003. *Kwame Nkrumah's Contribution to Pan-African Agency: An Afrocentric Analysis*, New York, Routledge.
- PORTER, M. E. 1987. From competitive advantage to corporate strategy. *Harvard Business Review*, 59, 1-11.
- PORTER, M. E. 1990. The Competitive Advantage of Nations. *Harvard Business Review*, 73-93.
- PORTER, M. E. 1998. *Competitive advantage of nations: Creating and sustaining superior performance*, New York, Free Press.
- PRAHALAD, C. K. & RAMASWAMY, V. 2000. Co-opting customer competence. *Harvard Business Review*, 78, 79-87.
- PRAHALAD, C. K. & RAMASWAMY, V. 2004. Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18, 5-14.
- PROUDLY SOUTH AFRICAN. 2014. Available: <http://www.proudlysa.co.za/consumer-site> [Accessed 1/03/2014].
- RAINISTO, S. K. 2003. *Success factors of place marketing: A study of place marketing practices in Northern Europe and the United States*. Doctoral, Helsinki University of Technology.
- RECLIFT, M. 2008. Sustainable development. In: DESAI, V. & POTTER, R. B. (eds.) *The companion to development studies*. 2 ed. London: Hodder.

- RECONNECTAFRICA. 2010. Brand Africa – What needs Fixing? Available: <http://www.reconnectafrica.com/October-2010/africa/brand-africa-what-needs-fixing.html> [Accessed 01/07/2012].
- REDCLIFT, M. 2005. Sustainable development (1987–2005): An oxymoron comes of age. *Sustainable development*, 13, 212-227.
- RHEINGOLD, H. 1993. *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*, Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley
- RHEINGOLD, H. 2000. *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*, Massachusetts, MIT Press.
- RITZI-MESSNER, N., VELDHOFEN, C. & FASSNACHT, L. 2010. The distribution of power within the community: Classes, Stände, Parties by Max Weber. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 10, 137-152.
- ROKKA, J. 2010. Netnographic inquiry and new translocal sites of the social. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 34, 381-387.
- ROKKA, J. & MOISANDER, J. 2009. Environmental dialogue in online communities: negotiating ecological citizenship among global travellers. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 33, 199-205.
- RUTA, M. 2005. Economic theories of political (dis)integration. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 19, 1-21.
- SADE-BECK, L. 2008. Internet ethnography: Online and offline. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3, 45-51.
- SAFRAN, W. 1991. Diasporas in modern societies: myths of homeland and return. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 1, 83-99.
- SAID, E. 1978. *Orientalism*, New York, Pantheon Books.
- SAID, E. 1993. *Culture and imperialism*, New York, Knopf.
- SANDLIN, J. A. 2007. Netnography as a consumer education research tool. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 31, 288-294.
- SCHAU, H. J. & MUÑIZ, A. M. J. 2002. Brand communities and personal identities: Negotiations in cyberspace. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 29, 344-349.
- SCHAU, H. J., MUÑIZ, A. M. J. & ARNOULD, E. J. 2009. How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 30-51.
- SCHNEIDER, B. 1987. The people make the place. *Personnel psychology*, 40, 437-453.
- SCHOOLER, R. D. 1965. Product bias in the Central American common market. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2, 394-397.
- SCHOUTEN, J. W. & MCALEXANDER, J. H. 1995. Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 43-61.
- SCHULTZ, M., HATCH, M. J. & LARSEN, M. H. 2000. *The Expressive Organization: Linking Identity, Reputation, and the Corporate Brand: Linking Identity, Reputation, and the Corporate Brand*, Oxford University Press.
- SCHUTZ, A. 1953. Common-sense and scientific interpretation of human action. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 14, 1–38.
- SCHUTZ, A. 1967. *The phenomenology of the social world*. In G., Walsh and F., Lehnert (Eds.), London, Heinemann.
- SCHWARTZ, M. S. & SCHWARTZ, C. G. 1955. Problems in participant observation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 60, 343-353.
- SEARLE, J. R. 1995. *The construction of social reality*, The Free Press.
- SEN, A. K. 1999. *Development as freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- SERAJ, M. 2012. We Create, we connect, we respect, therefore we are: Intellectual, social, and cultural value in online communities. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26, 209-222.
- SHEN, S. 2009. A constructed (un)reality on China's re-entry into Africa: the Chinese online community perception of Africa (2006–2008). *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 47, 425.
- SIGUÉ, S. P. 2012. Adding value to African commodities: Could ingredient branding be a solution? *Journal of African Business*, 13, 1-4.
- SIMOES, C. & DIBB, S. 2001. Rethinking the brand concept: New brand orientation. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 6, 217-224.
- SOFOLA, J. 1973. *African culture and the African personality: What makes an African person African*, Ibadan, African Resources.
- SOUBBOTINA, T. P. 2004. Beyond economic growth: An introduction to sustainable development. Washington DC: World Bank
- SPENCER-OATEY, H. 2008. *Culturally Speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory*, London, Continuum.
- STANLEY, H. M. 1899. *Through the dark continent or the sources of the Nile around the Great Lakes of equatorial Africa and down the Livingstone river to the Atlantic ocean*, London, George Newnes.
- STEENKAMP, C. 2009. Xenophobia in South Africa: What does it say about trust? *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 98, 439-447.
- STERN, B. B. 2006. What does brand mean? Historical-analysis method and construct definition. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34, 216-223.
- STERNBERG, R. J. 1997. Construct validation of a triangular love scale. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 27, 313-335.
- SUMNER, A. & TRIBE, M. A. 2008. *International development studies: Theories and methods in research and practice*, London, Sage.
- TAJFEL, H. 1981. *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- TAYLOR, T. L. 1999. Life in virtual worlds: Plural existence, multi-modalities, and other online research challenges. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43, 436-449.
- TEREZ, T. 2000. *22 Keys to creating a meaningful workplace*, Avon, Massachussetts, Adams Media.
- THAYER, R. H. 1959. Cultural Diplomacy. Vital Speeches Of The Day [serial online]. 25. [Accessed 03/05/2014].
- THE CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION ON THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK 2014. About the African Development Bank.
- THOMPSON, C. J., RINDFLEISCH, A. & ARSEL, Z. 2006. Emotional branding and the strategic value of the doppelgänger brand image. *Journal of Marketing*, 70, 50-64.
- THOMSON, K., DE CHERNATONY, L., ARGANBRIGHT, L. & KHAN, S. 1999. The buy-in benchmark: how staff understanding and commitment impact brand and business performance. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15, 819-835.
- TIME MAGAZINE [THE]. 2012. Africa rising: It's the world's next economic powerhouse. But huge challenges lie ahead. Available: <http://content.time.com/time/covers/europe/0,16641,20121203,00.html> [Accessed 15/05/2013].

- TISDELL, C. 1988. Sustainable development: Differing perspectives of ecologists and economists, and relevance to LDCs. *World Development*, 16, 373-384.
- TIWARI, M. & IBRAHIM, S. 2012. Sustainable human development at the grass roots: Different contexts, similar ingredients? *Oxford Development Studies*, 40, 69-85.
- TODARO, M. P. 1977. Development policy and population growth: A framework for planners. *Population and Development Review*, 23-43.
- TOSTI, D. T. & STOTZ, R. D. 2001. Building your brand from the inside out. *Marketing Management*, 10, 28-33.
- TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL. 2013. Corruption perceptions index 2013. Available: http://issuu.com/transparencyinternational/docs/cpi2013_brochure_single_pages?e=2496456/5813913 [Accessed 20/05/2014].
- TRIVERS, R. L. 1971. The evolution of reciprocal altruism. *Quarterly review of biology*, 35-57.
- TRUEMAN, M., KLEMM, M. & GIROUD, A. 2004. Can a city communicate? Bradford as a corporate brand. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 9, 317-330.
- TUAN, Y.-F. 1977. *Space and place: The perspective of experience*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota
- ULAGA, W. 2003. Capturing value creation in business relationships: a customer perspective. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 32, 677-693.
- UNESCO. 2014. Literacy and non formal education. Available: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/dakar/education/literacy/> [Accessed 31/10/2014].
- UNICEF. 2014. Generation 2030 Africa: Child demographics in Africa. Available: http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_Africa_Generation_2030_en_11Aug.pdf [Accessed 21/10/2014].
- UNITED NATIONS [THE]. 2000. Declaration, UN Millennium: Resolution adopted by the General Assembly,. *55th Session* [Online], 8. Available: <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>.
- UNITED NATIONS [THE]. 2013. A new global partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development. The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Available: <http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf> [Accessed 1/11/2013].
- UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT [THE] 2012. Economic development in Africa: Structural transformation and sustainable development in Africa.
- UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME [THE]. 2013a. Human development report. The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World. Available: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/14/hdr2013_en_complete.pdf [Accessed 06/01/2014].
- UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME [THE]. 2013b. MDG Report 2013: Assessing progress in Africa toward the millennium development goals. Available: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/MDG_Regional_Reports/Africa/MDG_report_2013_summary_EN.pdf [Accessed 10/01/2014].

- UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA [THE], AFRICAN UNION [THE] & AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK [THE]. 2012. Assessing regional integration in Africa (ARIA V): Towards an African continental Free Trade Area. Available: [http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Assessing Regional Integration in Africa - Towards an African Continental Free Trade Area.pdf](http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Assessing_Regional_Integration_in_Africa_-_Towards_an_African_Continental_Free_Trade_Area.pdf) [Accessed 22/03/2014].
- VALLASTER, C. & DE CHERNATONY, L. 2005. Internationalisation of services brands: The role of leadership during the internal brand building process. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 21, 181-203.
- VALLASTER, C. & DE CHERNATONY, L. 2006. Internal brand building and structuration: the role of leadership. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40, 761-784.
- VAN FLEET, J. W. 2012. Africa learning barometer. Available: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/africa-learning-barometer> [Accessed 15/03/2013].
- VAN HAM, P. 2002. Branding territory: Inside the wonderful worlds of PR and IR theory. *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 31, 249-269.
- VAN ZEIJL-ROZEMA, A., CÖRVERS, R., KEMP, R. & PIM, M. 2008. Governance for Sustainable Development: A Framework. *Sustainable Development*, 16, 410-421.
- VARGO, S. L. & LUSCH, R. F. 2004. Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68, 1-17.
- VON HIPPEL, E. 2009. Democratizing innovation: The evolving phenomenon of user innovation. *International Journal of Innovation Science*, 1, 29-40.
- VON MISES, L. 1996. *Human action*, San Francisco, Fox and Wilkes.
- WAGNER, H. R. (ed.) 1970. *Alfred Schutz on phenomenology and social relations*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- WALKER, S. S. (ed.) 2001. *African roots/American cultures: Africa in the creation of the Americas*, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
- WATTS, J. H. 2011. Ethical and practical challenges of participant observation in sensitive health research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 14, 301-312.
- WENDT, A. 1994. Collective identity formation and the international state. *American Political Science Review*, 88.
- WESTLEY, F. & MINTZBERG, H. 1989. Visionary leadership and strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 10, 17-32.
- WHITTY, M. T. 2004. Cyber-flirting: An examination of men's and women's flirting behaviour both offline and on the Internet. *Behaviour Change*, 21, 115-126.
- WILENTZ, G. 1992. Civilizations underneath: African heritage as cultural discourse in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon. *African American Review*, 26, 61-76.
- WILLAMS, P. D. 2007. From non-intervention to non-indifference: The origins and development of the African Union's security culture. *African Affairs*, 106, 253-279.
- WILSON, D. T. & JANTRANIA, S. 1994. Understanding the value of a relationship. *Asia-Australia Marketing*, 2 55-66.
- WORLD BANK [THE]. 1992. World development report: Development and the environment. World development indicators. Available: <http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2013/02/26/>

- [000425962_20130226162833/Rendered/PDF/105170REPLACEMENT0WD_R01992.pdf](#) [Accessed 15/03/2012].
- WORLD BANK [THE]. 2011. 50 things you didn't know about Africa. Available: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/0,,contentMDK:20563739~menuPK:1613741~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:258644,00.html> [Accessed 15/03/2014].
- WORLD BANK [THE]. 2013a. Africa's pulse: An analysis of issues shaping Africa's economic future. Available: http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Africa/Report/Africas-Pulse-brochure_Vol8.pdf [Accessed 06/01/2014].
- WORLD BANK [THE]. 2013b. Overview: Regional integration in Africa. Available: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/EXTREGINI/EXTAFRREGINICOO/0,,contentMDK:22548631~menuPK:7296233~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:1587585,00.html> [Accessed 22/03/2014].
- WORLD BANK [THE]. 2013c. Regional integration key to Africa's future competitiveness. Available: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/05/09/regional-integration-key-to-africa-s-future-competitiveness> [Accessed 22/03/2014].
- WORLD BANK [THE]. 2014a. 50 Factoids about Sub-Saharan African. Available: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/EXTPUBREP/EXTSTATINAFR/0,,contentMDK:21106218~menuPK:3094759~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:824043,00.html> [Accessed 15/03/2014].
- WORLD BANK [THE]. 2014b. *Why Should Africa Invest in People Now?* [Online]. Available: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/0,,contentMDK:22819434~menuPK:2246551~pagePK:2865106~piPK:2865128~theSitePK:258644,00.html> [Accessed 23/05/2014].
- WORLD BANK [THE]. 2014c. World Bank investor brief. Available: <http://treasury.worldbank.org/cmd/pdf/WorldBankInvestorBrief.pdf> [Accessed 01/04/2014].
- WORLD BANK [THE]. 2014d. Zimbabwe: Sub-Saharan Africa (developing only). Available: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/zimbabwe>.
- WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED-NATIONS. 1987. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future. Available: <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf> [Accessed 12/05/2012].
- WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM [THE]. 2013. The global gender gap report Available: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf [Accessed 16/10/2014].
- WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM [THE], THE WORLD BANK [THE], AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK [THE] & MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK [THE]. 2013. The Africa competitiveness report. Available: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Africa_Competitiveness_Report_2013.pdf [Accessed 28/03/2014].
- WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM ON AFRICA [THE]. 2013. Delivering on Africa's promise, regional agenda. Available:

- <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/AF13/WEF_AF13_Report.pdf> [Accessed 07/01/2014].
- WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION [THE]. 2014a. Global Health Observatory (GHO). Life expectancy. Situation. Available: http://www.who.int/gho/mortality_burden_disease/life_tables/situation_trends_text/en/ [Accessed 01/10/2014].
- WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION [THE]. 2014b. Life expectancy: Situation. Available: http://www.who.int/gho/mortality_burden_disease/life_tables/situation_trends_text/en/ [Accessed 10/06/2014].
- XUN, J. & REYNOLDS, J. 2010. Applying netnography to market research: The case of the online forum. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 18, 17-31.
- YEOH, B. S. A. 2005. The global cultural city? Spatial imagineering and politics in the (multi) cultural marketplaces of South-east Asia. *Urban Studies*, 42, 945-958.
- ZAVATTARO, S. M. 2010. Municipalities as public relations and marketing firms. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 32, 191-211.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Brand Africa on Social Media (Available 15 June 2013)

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BrandAfricaCreativeVillage>
- Youtube: Dambisa Moyo, Miller Matola, Simon Anholt:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w80b1HerqyE>
- Youtube: The Africa They Never Show You:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLda2HvVHY0>
- Youtube: Modern Day Africa that TV don't show you (A Must See):
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peYEep9azNM>
- Twitter: Branding Africa: Tweeting conversations on the Brand of Africa & it's associations East Africa <<https://twitter.com/brandingafrica>>

Appendix 2: Community attributes

According to Alexa (2013), a provider of commercial web traffic and a subsidiary of the Amazon company, AFD1 had a global ranking of 1052, and was ranked 456 within the United States of America (USA) in November 2013 (for comparison, google.com ranked 1 both globally and locally – ranking reflects the popularity of the website at that period and within a specific geographical zone). In contrast, AFD2 ranked 12359 globally, and 4140 locally within the same period (Alexa, 2013). However, it was notable that the rankings for both communities had remained rather constant over the period between November 2010 and November 2013 with slight fluctuations, about a unit below or above the 2013 numerical values. AFD2's visitors flowed mainly from the USA (63%), India (5,7%) and Canada (5,6%). In comparison, most of AFD1's traffic streamed predominantly from the USA (51%), followed by India (15%) and United Kingdom (UK) (3.6%) and so on. In general, USA and UK have the largest populations of the African diasporan in developed countries (Adi, 2002). The African diaspora that has so far contributed tangibly to any form of progressive change attained in Africa is also based in these two countries, USA and UK (ibid.). Indeed, Adi (2002) contends that the United Kingdom in particular played a *“leading role...in creating the modern African diaspora”* (p.237) by inspiring ideas that were drawn upon in the creation of political and developmental ideologies, for example Nkrumahism.

Slightly more than 50% of the participants on both AFD1 and AFD2 are female (Alexa, 2013). Yet surprisingly, the researcher discovered that there were more male than female diasporan members participating in debates on issues linked to Africa in both communities. The majority of AFD1's visitors accessed the community from school, work and home in that order, with school also implying university or college. A similar trend was noticeable within AFD2. However, a higher percentage than that of AFD1 engaged with the community site from school. Reading from the visual information provided by Alexa (2013), at least 70% of AFD1's visitors had attained (some) college and graduate level education. A similar pattern was detected among AFD2 members. While demographic statistics were no longer easily accessible as of November 13th 2013, in June 2012 (specifically, the 22nd) the largest demographic group was between fifty-five and sixty-fours years old, and constituted about 30% of total visitors to AFD1. On the other hand, approximately 50% of the visitors to AFD2 was above sixty-five years old.

If linked to the 'browsing location', the statistics stated above may help us infer the professions or occupations of most community members as being affiliated with the academic sector, since most of the traffic was based in education institutions. Remarkably the average age of members of both AFD1 and AFD2 who participated in this study tended to be about thirty years as can be calculated from the figures provided by the participants through interviews, or during interaction within their communities. The interviewed informants tended to have rather diverse career backgrounds. There were also topical overlaps between the two online communities in the sense that the separate communities addressed similar subject areas in either community, proving the prevalence of shared interests between the two collectives. A few members, particularly the devotees, had dual membership in the communities, implying that their insights would be shared on both platforms, and potentially to slightly different audiences. This discovery was helpful in that it permitted the tracing of variations in reactions to such contributions between the two communities, as well as the consistence or temporality of the contributors' views in those unique settings. However no pronounced discrepancies were identified, as revealed through the analysis.

The main difference between AFD1 and AFD2 was on the range of 'free services' offered by each: AFD2 provided a diversity of services to its members, such as space and templates for setting up blogs. This offered more opportunities to members to articulate their views and interests. Also, AFD2 allowed for a more homogenous self-clustering or segmentation of members on the basis of their topical interests, e.g. baseball or movies, potentially facilitating the establishment of closer bonds among members, and therefore more value derivation for them as well. These features were limited on AFD1, although specific topics would tend to motivate members to briefly build microscopic groups, for example to show their solidarity in relation to an issue or an individual. Moreover, the investigator discovered that based on responses and response rate, AFD1 had a much higher traffic than AFD2 – which was later confirmed by a review of Alexa's (2013) statistics. This allowed for the creation of most follow-up questions on AFD1, which was a step not only convenient in summing up members' views, but also in tracing whether the views were consistent – contrary to changing constantly every day or week – and therefore could be regarded as trustworthy by the investigator.

Appendix 3: African Diasporan Informants

Abel, Male, AFD1, USA
Alan, Male, AFD1, USA
Alex, Male, AFD2 USA
Alfie, Male AFD2, Canada
Ali, Male, AFD1, USA
Barry, Male, AFD1, USA
Berth, Female, AFD1, USA
Bia, Female, AFD1, USA
Ben, Male, AFD1, Germany
Bill, Male, AFD2, Canada
Bob, Male, AFD1, USA
Carl, Male, AFD1, USA
Casey, Male, AFD2, USA
Chad, Male, AFD2, USA
Chet, Male, AFD2, USA
Cliff, Male, AFD2, USA
Cole, Male, AFD1, USA
Dean, Male, AFD1, USA
Diana, Female, AFD2, Sweden
Don, Male, AFD1, UK
Doug, Male, AFD1, USA
Greg, Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA
Jacob, Male, AFD1, USA
Jack, Male AFD1, USA
Josh, Male, AFD2, USA
Kali, Male, AFD1, UK
Kelly, Female, AFD1, USA
Kob, Male, AFD1, USA

Luke, Male, AFD2, USA
Mark, Male, AFD2, USA
Mas, Male, AFD1, USA
Mia, Female, AFD2, France
Molly, Female, AFD1, USA
Nancy, Female, AFD2, USA
Neil, Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA
Noah, Male, AFD1, USA
Nora, Female, AFD1, USA
Paul, Male, AFD1, USA
Pearl, Male, AFD1, USA
Rhia, Female, AFD2, USA
Stan, Male, AFD1, USA
Tan, female, AFD1, USA
Ted, Male, AFD1, UK
Ray, Male, AFD1, USA
Terry, Male, AFD1, USA
Sam, Male, AFD1, USA
Sean, Male, AFD1, USA
Steve, Male, AFD1, USA
Tim, Male, AFD1 and AFD2, India
Trish, Female, AFD1, USA
Wally, Male, AFD1, USA
Wela, Male, AFD1 and AFD2, USA
Will, Male, AFD2, USA
Yolanda, Female, AFD1, USA
Zanda, Male, AFD1, USA
Zola, Male, AFD1, China

Appendix 4: Threads analysed

Thread	Date created	Responses
Is Africa on its way to beat USA	06/06/2012	1729
Who is to blame for Africa's failure	29/06/2012	240
Should Africa change its name, to what?	02/07/2012	55
Are you embarrassed/humiliated by Africa?	08/07/2012	25
As an African American would you go (back) to Africa?	03/06/2012	508
Africa as Home and African Americans' identity: Is it a shame?	20/05/2012	27
What's Africa's worth?	06/04/2012	122
Based on your perception of Africa, what would you do for/to it	06/09/2012	99
How does Africa make you feel	30/03/2012	277
Not Supporting Africa?	04/01/2008	178
As an African American would you go back to Africa?	13/06/2012	59
The light of African Spirituality	07/03/2012	411
Why do Africans come here thinking they are better than black Americans	29/03/2008	123
Go to Africa and Live!	07/03/2007	223
What do Black people know about AFRICA??	16/09/2009	15
Africans discovered America first	08/10/2007	18
The Motherland	11/01/2012	48
Why does Africa FAIL at life?	24/02/2011	338
WHY aren't Africans interested in manufacturing cars	29/09/2007	46
WHO IS TO BLAME FOR THE LACK OF AFRICAN UNITY!	25/07/2006	135
When Will We Start Calling Ourselves *AFRICANS* instead of "black"???	18/10/2007	161

Thread	Date created	Responses
Black people are not African period	06/05/2008	439
BLACKS WERE SLAVES IN AFRICA BEFORE WE CAME TO NORTH & SOUTH AMERICA	21/01/2009	230
Chinese don't like Africans. They don't like black skin	15/11/2009	32
Decolonizing the African Mind: Further Analysis and Strategy	09/10/2006	12
DO BLACK AMERICANS CARE ABOUT AFRICANS	28/04/2007	44
Would you move to Africa?	02/08/2008	74
Shattering myths about Africa	26/06/2008	29
Were the Africans dumb	16/06/2008	58
Who came first the African,Nubian,Hebrew or semite	04/10/2007	87
Why do a lot of African Americans hate Africans	06/07/2010	36

Appendix 5: Expert Interviewees

Expert11, Male, International Financial Institution
Expert22, Male, University Professor, Europe
Expert33, Male, International Financial Institution
Expert44, Female, International Development Institution
Expert55, Female, International Development Institution
Expert66, Male, International Development Institution
Expert77, Female, International Development Institution
Expert88, (Male, Historian, France
Expert99, Male, International Financial Institution
Expert01, Male, International Development Institution
Expert02, Male, Regional Development Institution

Appendix 6: Examples of personal attacks traded between community members

<p>“I say hell no we shouldn’t help no jungle monkeys. Africa is a piece of shit continent. If Africa was that damn good they, along with all these black power hypocritical negros here in this great land would all go back to the jungle. The people of Africa don’t want any help. They're doing exactly what they want to do, rape women, infect each other with that disease known as Aids, and kill each other like it’s on sale. I say let them perish right there in the jungle. And while they’re at it, take all these no good American Negros who want to blame the white man for all their problems and dump their black assess right there in Africa too so they can perish together. So long niggas!!!!!!!” (sic) (Kob).</p>
<p>“Got dayuum, are you fkin insane ? Africa is and will always remain a shythole. Have you not seen pictures of Kenya where the mofo's walk around in garbage up they knees? Get yo azzz on outta here with all dat africa non sense foe i call a psychiatrist on yo azz” (sic) (Cliff).</p>
<p>“Average IQ on the continent of Africa is 65. That includes all other races of people living there, which heightens the score for African blacks. An average chimp IQ is 29... Blacks in Africa, are intellectually closer to a chimp than they will ever be to a white american. Mild retardation by western standards...” (sic) (Stan).</p>

Appendix 7: African Centered Education

“African Centered Education Defined [:]

"African Centered Education is a system of sequentially planned educational opportunities for learners of African descent that is based on philosophies and theories centered in the African perception of reality, and delivered through a curriculum that develops the necessary skills to participate as global citizens and advocates for the African descendant community. The distinctive purpose of African Centered Education is to develop self-consciousness, self determination, positive self-concept, a sense of Africa as it applies to the upliftment of the community, and an understanding of Africa as it applies to personal growth and development. It is the overall goal of African Centered Education to offset the pervasive educational challenges caused by cultural amnesia and self hatred." (Alexander 1996, Asante 2001, Goggins 2001, Hilliard, 2003" (Geuka, 2014).